THE NUER

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A DESCRIPTION OF THE MODES OF LIVELIHOOD AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS OF A NILOTIC PEOPLE

BY

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TO
THE STAFF OF THE
AMERICAN MISSION
AT NASSER

[p. v]

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> 'Ah, the land of the rustling of wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia: that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of papyrus upon the waters, (saying) Go ye swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth, to a people terrible from their beginning onward; a nation that meteth out and treadeth down, whose land the rivers divide.'
>
> (*The Holy Bible* (Revised Version), Isaiah xviii. 1–2.)

PREFACE

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MY study of the Nuer was undertaken at the request of, and was mainly financed by, the Government of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, which also contributed generously towards the publication of its results. Part of the inquiry was carried out as a Leverhulme Research Fellow. To the Sudan Government and to the Leverhulme Research Fellowships Committee I make grateful acknowledgements.

I owe Professor and Mrs. C. G. Seligman a great debt for their friendship during the last fifteen years. Without their backing and encouragement this book might not have been written. Moreover, although they made no investigations among the Nuer, their brilliant researches among other Nilotic peoples, particularly the Shilluk and Dinka, laid the foundations of all future studies in these regions.[1]

I thank all those in the Sudan, at Khartoum and in Nuerland, who have given me hospitality and assistance; Sir John Maffey, then Governor-General; Sir Harold MacMichael, then Civil Secretary; Mr. and Mrs. S. Hillelson; Mr. C. A. Willis, Mr. A. G. Pawson, Mr. M. W. Parr, and Mr. E. G. Coryton, who were in turn Governors of the Upper Nile Province; Mr. P. Coriat, Capt. A. H. A. Alban, Capt. H. A. Romilly, Mr. J. F. Tierney, the late Mr. L. F. Hamer, Mr. B. J. Chatterton, Mr. B. A. Lewis, and Mr. F. D. Corfield, all of whom were at one time Commissioners of Nuer Districts. To Mr. F. D. Corfield, *amico et condiscipulo meo*, I am especially grateful for the interest he has shown in my work and for his generosity in allowing me to use many of his fine photographs.

I thank also the staff of the American Mission at Nasser, of the Congregation of Verona at Yoahnyang, and of the Church Missionary Society at Ler. I wish to make particular acknowledgement to the staff of the American Mission, especially to Miss B. Soule, who unreservedly placed their home, their time, and their knowledge at my disposal. I dedicate this book to them not only as an expression of personal gratitude, but also as a tribute to their devoted service to the Nuer.

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[1] *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, by C. G. and B. Z. Seligman, 1932.

My warmest thanks are further rendered to the many Nuer who made me their guest and befriended me. Rather than speak of individuals, I express my general respect for this brave and gentle people.

The following friends and colleagues have read this book and have given me valuable criticism and advice: Professor C. G. Seligman, Professor A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, whose influence on the theoretical side of my work will be obvious to any student of anthropology, Dr. M. Fortes, and Dr. H. M. Gluckman. I owe a special debt to Dr. Fortes. My ideas about the aims and methods of Social Anthropology have been influenced by the many talks we have had on the subject during several years of comradeship and, since in such a relationship it is not easy to state what one has taken and given, I acknowledge unreservedly that I have been greatly stimulated by our discussions.

Professor Seligman has pointed out to me, in reading the proofs, that my use of 'horticulture' and 'horticultural' is unusual. I did not intend to depart from conventional usage. However, I did not feel justified in altering these words to 'agriculture' and 'agricultural' throughout the book in the present difficulties of publication. Readers who prefer 'agriculture' and 'agricultural' can make the substitution for themselves.

A considerable part of the facts related in this book have been previously recorded, chiefly in *Sudan Notes and Records* and *Africa*, and I thank the editors of these journals and the editor of *Custom is King* for permission to republish them. I am indebted also to the editors and printers of both journals, to George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., and to Messrs. Hutchinson & Co., for the use of photographic blocks.

Several friends have lent me photographs, sketch-maps, and diagrams. These are acknowledged in the list of plates and figures, but I desire to record expressly my gratitude to Mr. F. D. Corfield, Dr. H. E. Hurst, Director of the Physical Department of the Egyptian Government, Mr. B. A. Lewis, Mr. C. L. Armstrong, the staff of the American Mission, Nasser, the late Mr. L. F. Hamer, Dr. E. S. Crispin, and Yuzbashi Talib Ismail.

My thanks are due to Mr. W. R. Key for his many secretarial services in the preparation of this volume.

E. E. E.-P.

January 1940

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INTRODUCTORY

I

FROM 1840, when Werne, Arnaud, and Thibaut made their ill-assorted voyage, to 1881, when the successful revolt of the Mahdi Muhammad Ahmed closed the Sudan to further exploration, several travellers penetrated Nuerland by one or other of the three great rivers that traverse it: the Bahr el Jebel (with the Bahr el Zeraf), the Bahr el Ghazal, and the Sobat. I have not been able to make much use of their writings, however, for their contact with the Nuer was slight and the impressions they recorded were superficial, and sometimes spurious. The most accurate and the least pretentious account is by the Savoyard elephant-hunter Jules Poncet, who spent several years on the borders of Nuerland.[1]

A later source of information about the Nuer are the *Sudan Intelligence Reports* which run from the reconquest of the Sudan in 1899 to the present day, their ethnological value decreasing in recent years. In the first two decades after the reconquest there are a few reports by military officers which contain interesting, and often shrewd, observations.[2] The publication of *Sudan Notes and Records*, commencing in 1918, provided a new medium for recording observations on the customs of the peoples of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and several political officers contributed papers on the Nuer. Two of these officers were killed in the performance of their duty, Major C. H. Stigand by the Aliab Dinka in 1919 and Captain V. H. Fergusson by the Nuong Nuer in 1927. In the same journal appeared the

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[1] Some of the writings from which I have derived information are Ferdinand Werne, *Expedition zur Entdeckung der Quellen des Weissen Nil (1840–1)*, 1848; Hadji-Abd-el-Hamid Bey (C. L. du Couret), *Voyage au Pays des Niam-Niams ou Hommes à Queue*, 1854; Brun-Rollet, *Le Nil Blanc et le Soudan*, 1855; G. Lejean, *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie*, Paris, 1860; Jules Poncet, *Le Fleuve Blanc* (*Extrait des Nouvelles Annales de Voyages*, 1863–4); Mr. and Mrs. J. Petherick, *Travels in Central Africa*, 1869; Ernst Marno, *Reisen im Gebiete des blauen und weissen Nil, im egyptischen Sudan und den angrenzenden Negerländern, in den Jahren 1869 bis 1873*, 1874. Others are mentioned later, particularly on pp. 126–7 and 134.

[2] These reports were used by Lieut.-Colonel Count Gleichen in his compilation: *The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, 2 vols., 1905.

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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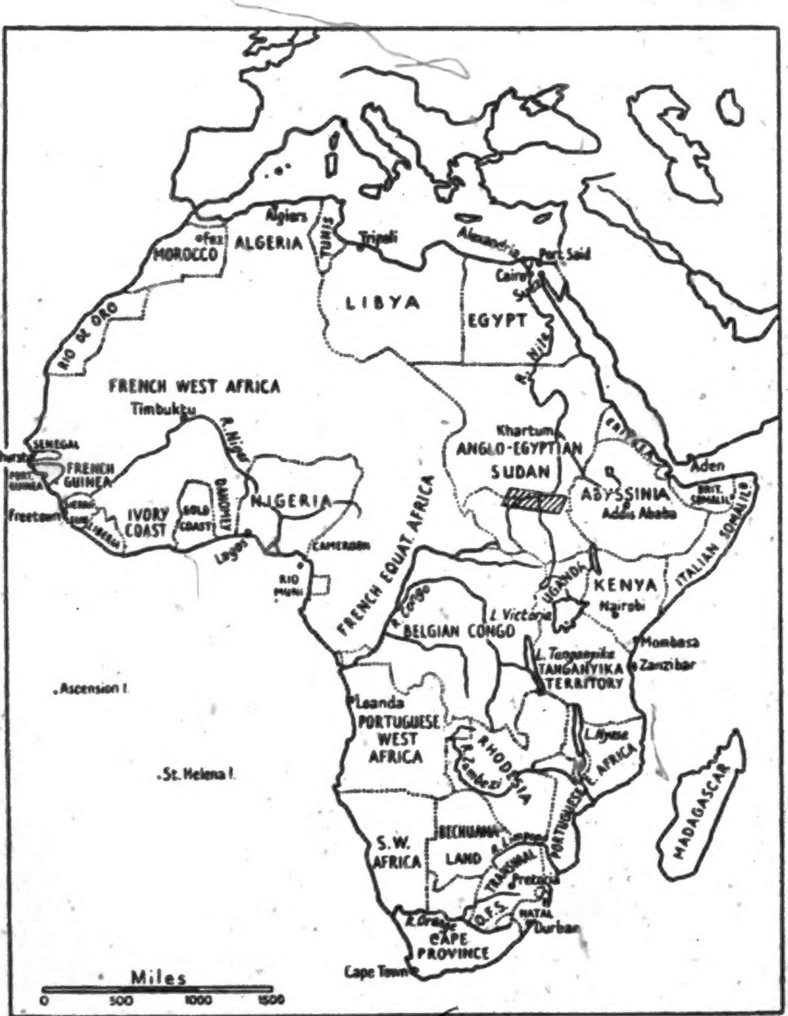
Algiers
Fez
MOROCCO
ALGERIA
TUNIS
Tripoli
Alexandria
Port Said
Cairo
Suez
LIBYA
EGYPT
R. Nile
RIO DE ORO
FRENCH WEST AFRICA
Timbuktu
R. Niger
SENEGAL
Bathurst
PORT. GUINEA
FRENCH GUINEA
Freetown
SIERRA LEONE
LIBERIA
IVORY COAST
GOLD COAST
DAHOMEY
NIGERIA
Lagos
CAMEROON
RIO MUNI
Khartum
ANGLO-EGYPTIAN SUDAN
ERITREA
Aden
BRIT. SOMALILAND
ABYSSINIA
Addis Ababa
ITALIAN SOMALILAND
FRENCH EQUAT. AFRICA
UGANDA
KENYA
Nairobi
L. Victoria
R. Congo
BELGIAN CONGO
Mombasa
Zanzibar
L. Tanganyika
TANGANYIKA TERRITORY
Ascension I.
Loanda
PORTUGUESE WEST AFRICA
RHODESIA
R. Zambezi
L. Nyasa
PORTUGUESE E. AFRICA
MADAGASCAR
St. Helena I.
S.W. AFRICA
BECHUANALAND
R. Limpopo
TRANSVAAL
Pretoria
O.F.S.
NATAL
Durban
R. Orange
CAPE PROVINCE
Cape Town
Miles
0
500
1000
1500

Map showing approximate area (*shaded*) occupied by the Nuer.

[Face p. 1]

first attempt, by Mr. H. C. Jackson, to write a comprehensive account of the Nuer, and great credit is due to him for the manner in which, in spite of serious obstacles, he carried it out.[1]

After I had begun my researches a book by Miss Ray Huffman, of the American Mission, and some papers by Father J. P. Crazzolara, of the Congregation of Verona, were published.[2] Although my own contributions to various journals are reprinted, in a condensed form, in this book, or will be reprinted in a subsequent volume, I allude to them here so that the reader may have a complete bibliography. I have omitted much detail that appeared in these articles.[3]

Lists of a few Nuer words were compiled by Brun-Rollet and Marno. More detailed vocabularies have been written by Major Stigand and Miss Huffman, and grammars by Professor Westermann and Father Crazzolara. Professor Westermann's paper contains also some ethnological material.[4]

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[1] Major C. H. Stigand, 'Warrior Classes of the Nuers', *S. N. & R.*, 1918, pp. 116–18, and 'The Story of Kir and the White Spear', ibid., 1919, pp. 224–6; Capt. V. H. Fergusson, 'The Nuong Nuer', ibid., 1921, pp. 146–55, and 'Nuer Beast Tales', ibid., 1924, pp. 105–12; H. C. Jackson, 'The Nuer of the Upper Nile Province', ibid., 1923, pp. 59–107 and 123–89 (this paper was reprinted as a book under the same title by El Hadara Printing Press, Khartoum, no date, and contained a terminal essay of 23 pages by P. Coriat on 'The Gaweir Nuers').

[2] Ray Huffman, *Nuer Customs and Folk-lore*, 1931, 105 pp.; Father J. P. Crazzolara, 'Die Gar-Zeremonie bei den Nuer', *Africa*, 1932, pp. 28–39, and 'Die Bedeutung des Rindes bei den Nuer', ibid., 1934, pp. 300–20.

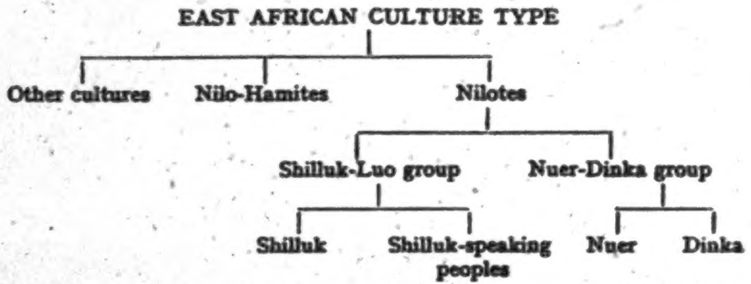
[3] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, 'The Nuer, Tribe and Clan', *S. N. & R.*, 1933, pp. 1–53, 1934, pp. 1–57, and 1935, pp. 37–87; 'The Nuer, Age-Sets', ibid., 1936, pp. 233–69; 'Economic Life of the Nuer', ibid., 1937, pp. 209–45, and 1938, pp. 31–77; 'Customs Relating to Twins among the Nilotic Nuer', *Uganda Journal*, 1936, pp. 230–8; 'Daily Life of the Nuer in Dry Season Camps', *Custom is King, A Collection of Essays in Honour of R. R. Marett*, 1936, pp. 291–9; 'Some Aspects of Marriage and the Family among the Nuer', *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft*, 1938, pp. 306–92; 'Nuer Time-Reckoning', *Africa*, 1939, pp. 189–216. The chapter on the Nuer (Chap. VI) in *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, by Prof. C. G. and Mrs. B. Z. Seligman, 1932, was compiled from my notebooks.

[4] Brun-Rollet, 'Vokabularien der Dinka-, Nuehr- und Schilluk-Sprachen', *Petermann's Mittheilungen*, *Erg.* II, 1862–3, pp. 25–30; Marno, 'Kleine Vocabularien der Fungi-, Tabi-, Bertat- und Nuehr-Sprache', *Reisen im Gebiete des blauen und weissen Nil*, 1874, pp. 481–95; Professor Diedrich Westermann, 'The Nuer Language', *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen*, 1912, pp. 84–141; Major C. H. Stigand, *A Nuer-English Vocabulary*, 1923, 33 pp.; Ray Huffman, *Nuer-English Dictionary*, 1929, 63 pp., and *English-Nuer Dictionary*, 1931, 80 pp.; Father J. P. Crazzolara, *Outlines of a Nuer Grammar*, 1933, 218 pp.

II

I describe in this volume the ways in which a Nilotic people obtain their livelihood, and their political institutions. The information I collected about their domestic life will be published in a second volume. 121

The Nuer,[1] who call themselves *Nath* (sing. *ran*), are round 101 about 200,000 souls and live in the swamps and open savannah 131 that stretch on both sides of the Nile south of its junction with the Sobat and Bahr el Ghazal, and on both banks of these two tributaries. They are tall, long-limbed, and narrow-headed, [142] as may be seen in the illustrations. Culturally they are similar 101 to the Dinka, and the two peoples together form a subdivision of the Nilotic group, which occupies part of an East-African culture-area the characteristics and extent of which are at present ill-defined. A second Nilotic subdivision comprises the Shilluk and various peoples who speak languages similar to Shilluk (Luo, Anuak, Lango, &c.). Probably these Shilluk-speaking peoples are all more alike to one another than any one of them is to the Shilluk, though little is yet known about most of them. A tentative classification may be thus presented:



Nuer and Dinka are too much alike physically and their languages and customs are too similar for any doubt to arise about their common origin, though the history of their divergence is unknown. The problem is complicated: for example, the Atwot, to the west of the Nile, appear to be a Nuer tribe who have adopted many Dinka habits,[2] while the Jikany tribes of

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[1] The word 'Nuer' is sanctioned by a century of usage. It is probably of Dinka origin. I use it in singular and plural, speaking of 'a Nuer man' and of 'the Nuer people'.

[2] Poncet, op. cit., p. 54. They appear as Atot in the map on p. 129.

101 Nuerland are said to be of Dinka origin. Moreover, there has been continuous contact between the two peoples that has resulted in much miscegenation and cultural borrowing. Both peoples recognize their common origin.

When we possess more information about some of the Shilluk-speaking peoples it will be possible to state what are the defining characters of Nilotic culture and social structure. At present such a classification is exceedingly difficult and I postpone the attempt, devoting this book to a plain account of the Nuer and neglecting the many obvious comparisons that might be made with other Nilotic peoples.

128 Political institutions are its main theme, but they cannot be understood without taking into account environment and modes of livelihood. I therefore devote the earlier part of the book to a description of the country in which the Nuer live and of how they obtain the necessities of life. It will be seen that the Nuer political system is consistent with their oecology.

The groups chiefly dealt with in the later part of the book are the people, the tribe and its segments, the clan and its lineages, and the age-sets. Each of these groups is, or forms part of, a segmentary system, by reference to which it is defined, and, consequently the status of its members, when acting as such towards one another and to outsiders, is undifferentiated. These statements will be elucidated in the course of our inquiry. We first describe the interrelation of territorial segments within a territorial, or political, system and then the relation of other social systems to this system. What we understand by political structure will be evident as we proceed, but we may state as an initial definition that we refer to relations within a territorial system between groups of persons who live in spatially well-defined areas and are conscious of their identity and exclusiveness. Only in the smallest of these communities are their members in constant contact with one another. We distinguish these political groups from local groups of a different kind, namely domestic groups, the family, the household, and the joint family, which are not, and do not form part of, segmentary systems, and in which the status of members in respect to each other and to outsiders is differentiated. Social ties in domestic groups are primarily of a kinship order, and corporate life is normal.

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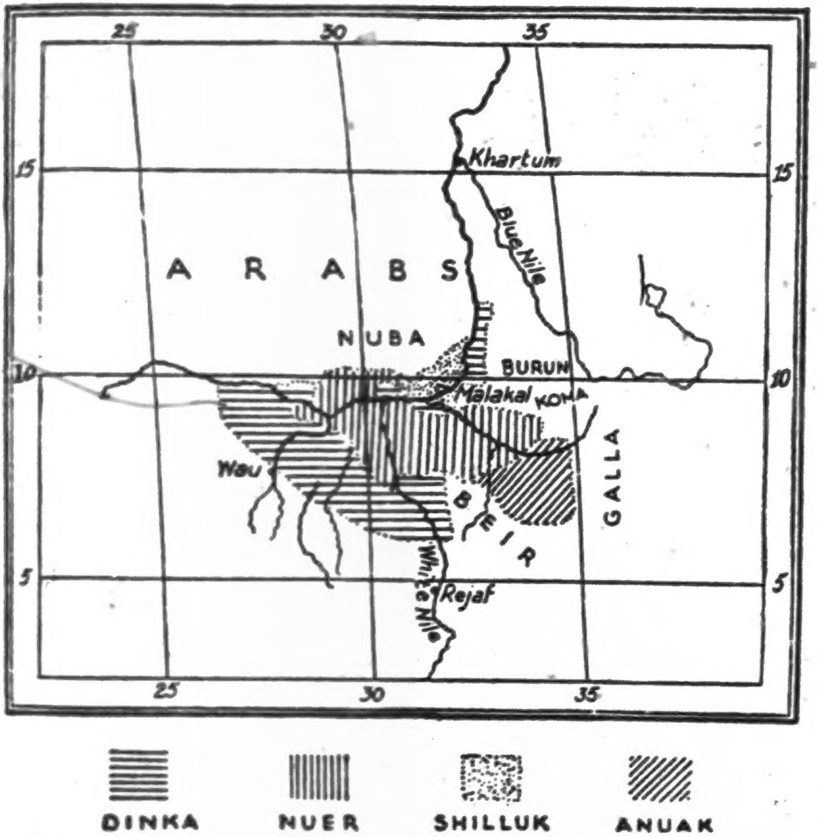
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15
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5
Khartum
Blue Nile
ARABS
NUBA
BURUN
Malakal
KOMA
Wau
BEIR
GALLA
White Nile
Rejaf
DINKA
NUER
SHILLUK
ANUAK

The Nuer and neighbouring peoples

[Face p. 4]

619 128 The Nuer political system includes all the peoples with whom they come into contact. By 'people' we mean all persons who speak the same language and have, in other respects, the same culture, and consider themselves to be distinct from like aggregates. The Nuer, the Shilluk, and the Anuak each occupy a continuous territory, but a people may be distributed in widely separate areas, e.g. the Dinka. When a people is, like the Shilluk, politically centralized, we may speak of a 'nation'. The Nuer and Dinka, on the other hand, are divided into a number of tribes which have no common organization or central administration and these peoples may be said to be, politically, a congeries of tribes, which sometimes form loose federations. The Nuer differentiate those tribes which live in the homeland to the west of the Nile from those which have migrated to the east of it. We find it convenient to make the same distinction and to speak of the Western Nuer and the Eastern Nuer. The Eastern Nuer may be further divided, for descriptive purposes, into those tribes which live near the Zeraf river and those which live to north and south of the Sobat river.

The largest political segment among the Nuer is the tribe. There is no larger group who, besides recognizing themselves as a distinct local community, affirm their obligation to combine in warfare against outsiders and acknowledge the rights of their members to compensation for injury. A tribe is divided into a number of territorial segments and these are more than mere geographical divisions, for the members of each consider themselves to be distinct communities and sometimes act as such. We call the largest tribal segments 'primary sections', the segments of a primary section 'secondary sections', and the segments of a secondary section 'tertiary sections'. A tertiary tribal section consists of a number of villages which are the smallest political units of Nuerland. A village is made up of domestic groups, occupying hamlets, homesteads, and huts.

128 624 We discuss the institution of the feud and the part played in it by the leopard-skin chief in relation to the political system. The word 'chief' may be a misleading designation, but it is sufficiently vague to be retained in the absence of a more suitable English word. He is a sacred person without political authority. Indeed, the Nuer have no government, and their

128
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state might be described as an ordered anarchy. Likewise they lack law, if we understand by this term judgements delivered by an independent and impartial authority which has, also, power to enforce its decisions. There are signs that certain changes were taking place in this respect, and at the end of the chapter on the political system we describe the emergence of prophets, persons in whom dwell the spirits of Sky-gods, and we suggest that in them we may perceive the beginnings of political development. Leopard-skin chiefs and prophets are the only ritual specialists who, in our opinion, have any political importance.

128
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614
After an examination of the political structure we describe the lineage system and discuss the relation between the two. Nuer lineages are agnatic, i.e. they consist of persons who trace their descent exclusively through males to a common ancestor. The clan is the largest group of lineages which is definable by reference to rules of exogamy, though agnatic relationship is recognized between several clans. A clan is segmented into lineages, which are diverging branches of descent from a common ancestor. We call the largest segments into which a clan is divided its 'maximal lineages', the segments of a maximal lineage its 'major lineages', the segments of a major lineage its 'minor lineages', and the segments of a minor lineage its 'minimal lineages'. The minimal lineage is the one to which a man usually refers when asked what is his lineage. A lineage is thus a group of agnates, dead or alive, between whom kinship can be traced genealogically, and a clan is an exogamous system of lineages. These lineage groups differ from political groups in that the relationship of their members to one another is based on descent and not on residence, for lineages are dispersed and do not compose exclusive local communities, and, also, in that lineage values often operate in a different range of situations from political values.

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561
After discussing the lineage system in its relation to territorial segmentation we describe briefly the age-set system. The adult male population falls into stratified groups based on age, and we call these groups 'age-sets'. The members of each set become such by initiation and they remain in it till death. The sets do not form a cycle, but a progressive system, the junior set

passing through positions of relative seniority till it becomes the 128
senior set; after which its members die and the set becomes a 561
memory, since its name does not recur. The only significant age-grades are those of boyhood and manhood, so that once a lad has been initiated into a set he remains in the same age-grade for the rest of his life. There are no grades of warriors and elders such as are found in other parts of East Africa. Though the sets are conscious of their social identity they have no corporate functions. The members of a set may act jointly in a small locality, but the whole group never co-operates exclusively in any activity. Nevertheless, the system is organized tribally and each tribe is stratified according to age independently of other tribes, though adjacent tribes may co-ordinate their age-sets.

The Nuer, like all other peoples, are also socially differentiated 128
according to sex. This dichotomy has a very limited, and nega- [562]
tive, significance for the structural relations which form the
subject of this book. Its importance is domestic rather than
political and little attention is paid to it. The Nuer cannot be [565]
said to be stratified into classes. Within a tribe there is slight differentiation of status between members of a dominant clan, Nuer of other clans, and Dinka who have been incorporated into the tribe, but, except perhaps on the periphery of Nuer expansion eastwards, this constitutes distinction of categories rather than of ranks.

Such, briefly, is the plan of this book and such are the meanings we attach to the words most frequently used to describe the groups discussed in it. We hope in the course of our inquiry to refine these definitions. The inquiry is directed to two ends: to describe the life of the Nuer, and to lay bare some of the principles of their social structure. We have endeavoured to give as concise an account of their life as possible, believing that a short book is of greater value to the student and administrator than a long one, and, omitting much material, we have recorded only what is significant for the limited subject of discussion.

III

When the Government of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan asked 000
me to make a study of the Nuer I accepted after hesitation and with misgivings. I was anxious to complete my study of the

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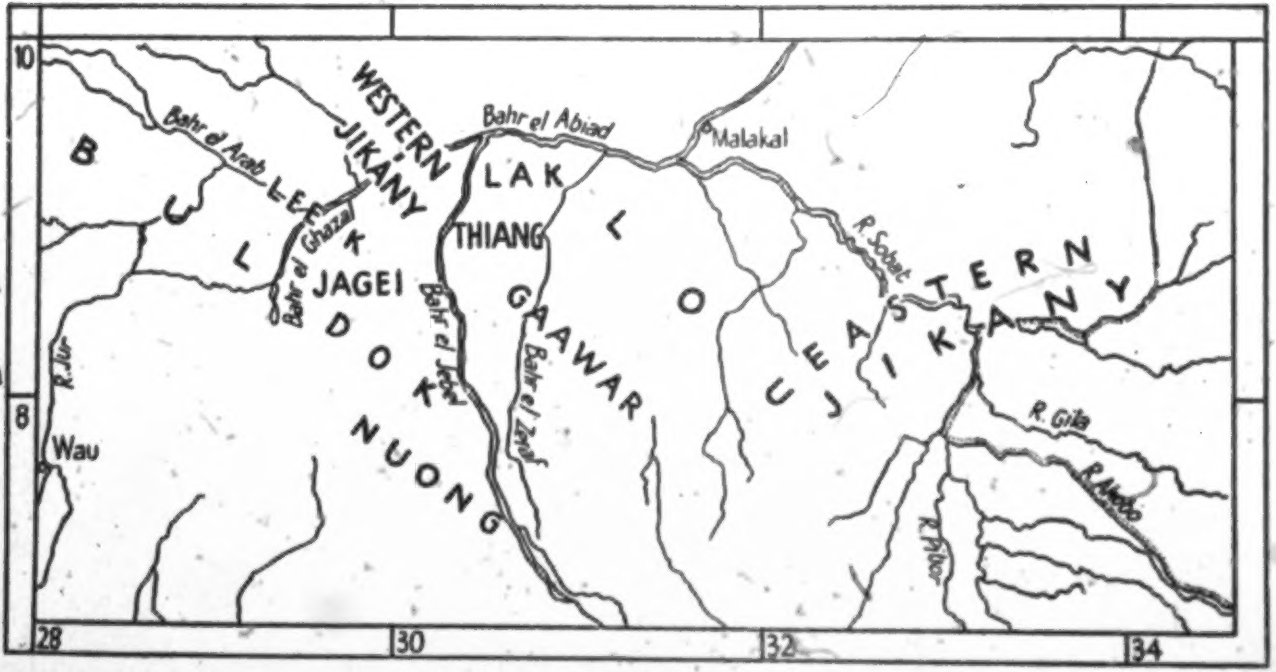
[p.8]



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8
28
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32
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BUL
LEEK
JAGEI
DOK
NUONG
WESTERN JIKANY
LAK
THIANG
GAAWAR
LOU
EASTERN JIKANY
Bahr el Arab
Bahr el Ghazal
Bahr el Abiad
Bahr el Jebel
Bahr el Zeraf
Malakal
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R. Jur
Wau

Sketch-map showing the larger Nuer tribes.

PLATE I

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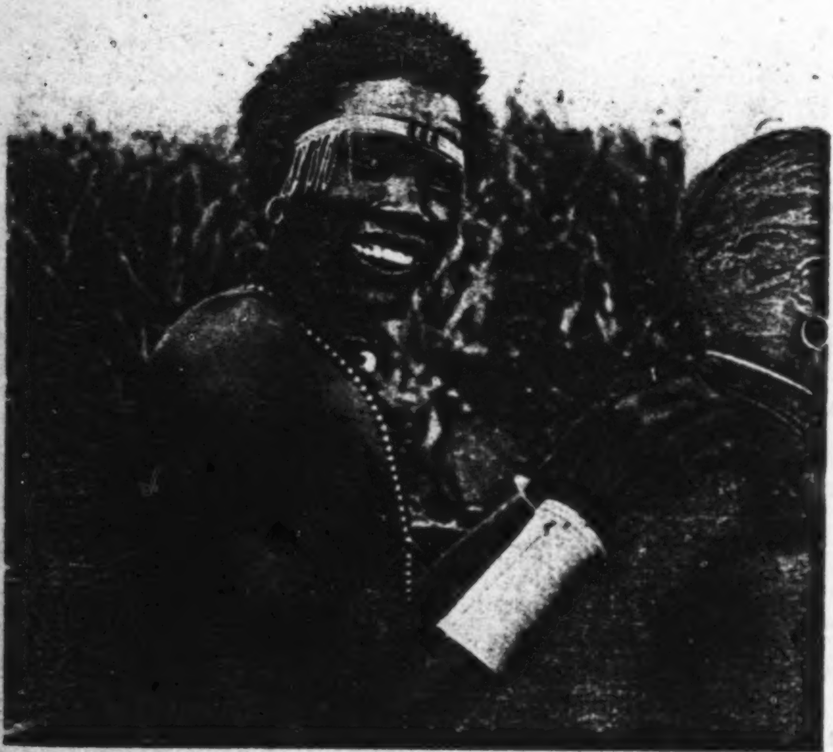

Youth (Eastern Gaajok) fastening giraffe-hair necklace on friend

[Face p. 8]

000 Azande before embarking on a new task. I also knew that a study of the Nuer would be extremely difficult. Their country and character are alike intractable and what little I had previously seen of them convinced me that I would fail to establish friendly relations with them.

123 I have always considered, and still consider, that an adequate sociological study of the Nuer was impossible in the circumstances in which most of my work was done. The reader must judge what I have accomplished. I would ask him not to judge too harshly, for if my account is sometimes scanty and uneven I would urge that the investigation was carried out in adverse circumstances; that Nuer social organization is simple and their culture bare; and that what I describe is almost entirely based on direct observation and is not augmented by copious notes taken down from regular informants, of whom, indeed, I had none. I, unlike most readers, know the Nuer, and must judge my work more severely than they, and I can say that if this book reveals many insufficiencies I am amazed that it has ever appeared at all. A man must judge his labours by the obstacles he has overcome and the hardships he has endured, and by these standards I am not ashamed of the results.

It may interest readers if I give them a short description of the conditions in which I pursued my studies, for they will then be better able to decide which statements are likely to be based on sound observation and which to be less well-grounded.

122 I arrived in Nuerland early in 1930. Stormy weather prevented my luggage from joining me at Marseilles, and owing to errors, for which I was not responsible, my food stores were not forwarded from Malakal and my Zande servants were not instructed to meet me. I proceeded to Nuerland (Leek country) with my tent, some equipment, and a few stores bought at Malakal, and two servants, an Atwot and a Bellanda, picked up hastily at the same place.

When I landed at Yoahnyang[1] on the Bahr el Ghazal the Catholic missionaries there showed me much kindness. I waited

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[1] I take this early opportunity to inform readers that I have not spelt Nuer names and other words with phonetic consistency. I raise no objection, therefore, to any one spelling them differently. Generally I have given the nominative form, but an occasional genitive has crept into the text, diagrams, and maps.

122 for nine days on the river bank for the carriers I had been promised. By the tenth day only four of them had arrived and if it had not been for the assistance of an Arab merchant, who recruited some local women, I might have been delayed for an indefinite period.

On the following morning I set out for the neighbouring village of Pakur, where my carriers dropped tent and stores in the centre of a treeless plain, near some homesteads, and refused to bear them to the shade about half a mile further. Next day was devoted to erecting my tent and trying to persuade the Nuer, through my Atwot servant who spoke Nuer and some Arabic, to remove my abode to the vicinity of shade and water, which they refused to do. Fortunately a youth, Nhial, who has since been my constant companion in Nuerland, attached himself to me and after twelve days persuaded his kinsmen to carry my goods to the edge of the forest where they lived.

My servants, who, like most natives of the Southern Sudan, were terrified of the Nuer, had by this time become so scared that after several sleepless and apprehensive nights they bolted to the river to await the next steamer to Malakal, and I was left alone with Nhial. During this time the local Nuer would not lend a hand to assist me in anything and they only visited me to ask for tobacco, expressing displeasure when it was denied them. When I shot game to feed myself and my Zande servants, who had at last arrived, they took the animals and ate them in the bush, answering my remonstrances with the rejoinder that since the beasts had been killed on their land they had a right to them.

My main difficulty at this early stage was inability to converse freely with the Nuer. I had no interpreter. None of the Nuer spoke Arabic. There was no adequate grammar of the language and, apart from three short Nuer–English vocabularies, no dictionary. Consequently the whole of my first and a large part of my second expedition were taken up with trying to master the language sufficiently to make inquiries through it, and only those who have tried to learn a very difficult tongue without the aid of an interpreter and adequate literary guidance will fully appreciate the magnitude of the task.

After leaving Leek country I went with Nhial and my two

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Zande servants to Lou country. We motored to Muot dit with the intention of residing by the side of its lake, but found it entirely deserted, for it was too early for the annual concentration there. When some Nuer were found they refused to divulge the whereabouts of nearby camps and it was with considerable difficulty that we located one. We pitched our tents there and when the campers retired on Muot dit we accompanied them.

My days at Muot dit were happy and remunerative. I made friends with many Nuer youths who endeavoured to teach me their language and to show me that if I was a stranger they did not regard me as an obnoxious one. Every day I spent hours fishing with these lads in the lake and conversing with them in my tent. I began to feel my confidence returning and would have remained at Muot dit had the political situation been more favourable. A Government force surrounded our camp one morning at sunrise, searched for two prophets who had been leaders in a recent revolt, took hostages, and threatened to take many more if the prophets were not handed over. I felt that I was in an equivocal position, since such incidents might recur, and shortly afterwards returned to my home in Zandeland, having accomplished only three and a half months' work among the Nuer.

It would at any time have been difficult to do research among the Nuer, and at the period of my visit they were unusually hostile, for their recent defeat by Government forces and the measures taken to ensure their final submission had occasioned deep resentment. Nuer have often remarked to me, 'You raid us, yet you say we cannot raid the Dinka'; 'You overcame us with firearms and we had only spears. If we had had firearms we would have routed you'; and so forth. When I entered a cattle camp it was not only as a stranger but as an enemy, and they seldom tried to conceal their disgust at my presence, refusing to answer my greetings and even turning away when I addressed them.

At the end of my 1930 visit to Nuerland I had learnt a little of the language but had the scantiest notes of their customs. In the dry season of 1931 I returned to make a fresh attempt, going first for a fortnight to the American Mission at Nasser, where I was generously assisted by the American and Nuer staff,

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and then to cattle camps on the Nyanding river—an unfortunate choice, for the Nuer there were more hostile than those I had hitherto encountered and the conditions were harsher than any I had previously experienced. The water was scanty and foul, the cattle were dying of rinderpest, and the camps swarmed with flies. The Nuer would not carry my stores and equipment, and as I had only two donkeys, one of them lame, it was impossible to move. Eventually I managed to obtain a lorry and extricate myself, but not before experiencing the Nuer in his most paralysing mood. As every effort was made to prevent me from entering the cattle camps and it was seldom that I had visitors I was almost entirely cut off from communication with the people. My attempts to prosecute inquiries were persistently obstructed.

Nuer are expert at sabotaging an inquiry and until one has resided with them for some weeks they steadfastly stultify all efforts to elicit the simplest facts and to elucidate the most innocent practices. I have obtained in Zandeland more information in a few days than I obtained in Nuerland in as many weeks. After a while the people were prepared to visit me in my tent, to smoke my tobacco, and even to joke and make small talk, but they were unwilling either to receive me in their windscreens or to discuss serious matters. Questions about customs were blocked by a technique I can commend to natives who are inconvenienced by the curiosity of ethnologists. The following specimen of Nuer methods is the commencement of a conversation on the Nyanding river, on a subject which admits of some obscurity but, with willingness to co-operate, can soon be elucidated.

I: Who are you?
Cuol: A man.
I: What is your name?
Cuol: Do you want to know my *name*?
I: Yes.
Cuol: You want to know *my* name?
I: Yes, you have come to visit me in my tent and I would like to know who you are.
Cuol: All right. I am Cuol. What is your name?
I: My name is Pritchard.
Cuol: What is your father's name?

I: My father's name is also Pritchard.
Cuol: No, that cannot be true. You cannot have the same name as your father.
I: It is the name of my lineage. What is the name of your lineage?
Cuol: Do you want to know the name of my lineage?
I: Yes.
Cuol: What will you do with it if I tell you? Will you take it to your country?
I: I don't want to do anything with it. I just want to know it since I am living at your camp.
Cuol: Oh well, we are Lou.
I: I did not ask you the name of your tribe. I know that. I am asking you the name of your lineage.
Cuol: Why do you want to know the name of my lineage?
I: I don't want to know it.
Cuol: Then why do you ask me for it? Give me some tobacco.

I defy the most patient ethnologist to make headway against this kind of opposition. One is just driven crazy by it. Indeed, after a few weeks of associating solely with Nuer one displays, if the pun be allowed, the most evident symptoms of 'Nuerosis'.

From the Nyanding I moved, still without having made any real progress, to a cattle camp at Yakwac on the Sobat river where I pitched my tent a few yards from the windscreens. Here I remained, save for a short interval spent at the American Mission, for over three months—till the commencement of the rains. After the usual initial difficulties I at last began to feel myself a member of a community and to be accepted as such, especially when I had acquired a few cattle. When the campers at Yakwac returned to their inland village I had no means of accompanying them and intended to visit Leek country again. A severe attack of malaria sent me to Malakal hospital, and thence to England, instead. Five and a half months' work was accomplished on this second expedition.

During the tenure of a subsequent appointment in Egypt I published in *Sudan Notes and Records* essays which form the basis of this book, for I had not expected to have a further opportunity to visit the Nuer. However, in 1935 I was granted a two years' research fellowship by the Leverhulme trustees to make an intensive study of the Pagan Galla of Ethiopia. As delay was caused by diplomatic chicanery I spent two and a half

122 months on the Sudan–Ethiopian frontier making a survey of the Eastern Anuak, and when, at last, I entered Ethiopia the imminence of Italian invasion compelled me to jettison my Galla studies and enabled me to advance my investigation of the Nuer, during a further seven weeks' residence in their country, by revising earlier notes and by collecting more material. I visited the Nuer who live on the Pibor river, renewed my acquaintance with friends of the Nasser Mission and at Yakwac, and spent about a month among the Eastern Jikany at the mouth of the Nyanding.

In 1936, after making a survey of the Nilotic Luo of Kenya, I spent a final seven weeks in Nuerland, visiting that part of it which lies to the west of the Nile, especially the Karlual section of the Leek tribe. My total residence among the Nuer was thus about a year. I do not consider a year adequate time in which to make a sociological study of a people, especially of a difficult people in adverse circumstances, but serious sickness on both the 1935 and 1936 expeditions closed investigations prematurely.

123 Besides physical discomfort at all times, suspicion and obstinate resistance encountered in the early stages of research, absence of interpreter, lack of adequate grammar and dictionary, and failure to procure the usual informants, there developed a further difficulty as the inquiry proceeded. As I became more friendly with the Nuer and more at home in their language they visited me from early morning till late at night, and hardly a moment of the day passed without men, women, or boys in my tent. As soon as I began to discuss a custom with one man another would interrupt the conversation in pursuance of some affair of his own or by an exchange of pleasantries and jokes. The men came at milking-time and some of them remained till midday. Then the girls, who had just finished dairy-work, arrived and insisted on attention. Married women were less frequent visitors, but boys were generally under the awning of my tent if grown-ups were not present to drive them away. These endless visits entailed constant badinage and interruption and, although they offered opportunity for improving my knowledge of the Nuer language, imposed a severe strain. Nevertheless, if one chooses to reside in a Nuer camp one must submit to Nuer custom, and they are persistent and tireless visitors. The chief

privation was the publicity to which all my actions were exposed, and it was long before I became hardened, though never entirely insensitive, to performing the most intimate operations before an audience or in full view of the camp.

Since my tent was always in the midst of homesteads or windscreens and my inquiries had to be conducted in public, I was seldom able to hold confidential conversations and never succeeded in training informants capable of dictating texts and giving detailed descriptions and commentaries. This failure was compensated for by the intimacy I was compelled to establish with the Nuer. As I could not use the easier and shorter method of working through regular informants I had to fall back on direct observation of, and participation in, the everyday life of the people. From the door of my tent I could see what was happening in camp or village and every moment was spent in Nuer company. Information was thus gathered in particles, each Nuer I met being used as a source of knowledge, and not, as it were, in chunks supplied by selected and trained informants. Because I had to live in such close contact with the Nuer I knew them more intimately than the Azande, about whom I am able to write a much more detailed account. Azande would not allow me to live as one of themselves; Nuer would not allow me to live otherwise. Among Azande I was compelled to live outside the community; among Nuer I was compelled to be a member of it. Azande treated me as a superior; Nuer as an equal.

I do not make far-reaching claims. I believe that I have understood the chief values of the Nuer and am able to present a true outline of their social structure, but I regard, and have designed, this volume as a contribution to the ethnology of a particular area rather than as a detailed sociological study, and I shall be content if it is accepted as such. There is much that I did not see or inquire into and therefore plenty of opportunity for others to make investigations in the same field and among neighbouring peoples. I hope they will do so and that one day we may have a fairly complete record of Nilotic social systems.

CHAPTER I

INTEREST IN CATTLE

I

233 [241] A PEOPLE whose material culture is as simple as that of the Nuer are highly dependent on their environment. They are pre-eminently pastoral, though they grow more millet and maize than is commonly supposed. Some tribes cultivate more and some less, according to conditions of soil and surface water and their wealth in cattle, but all alike regard horticulture as toil forced on them by poverty of stock, for at heart they are herdsmen, and the only labour in which they delight is care of cattle. They not only depend on cattle for many of life's necessities but they have the herdsman's outlook on the world. Cattle are their dearest possession and they gladly risk their lives to defend their herds or to pillage those of their neighbours. Most of their social activities concern cattle and *cherchez la vache* is the best advice that can be given to those who desire to understand Nuer behaviour.[1]

The attitude of Nuer towards, and their relations with, neighbouring peoples are influenced by their love of cattle and their desire to acquire them. They have profound contempt for peoples with few or no cattle, like the Anuak, while their wars against Dinka tribes have been directed to seizure of cattle and [423] control of pastures. Each Nuer tribe and tribal section has its own pastures and water-supplies, and political fission is closely related to distribution of these natural resources, ownership of which is generally expressed in terms of clans and lineages. Disputes between tribal sections are very often about cattle, and cattle are the compensation for loss of life and limb that is so frequently their outcome. Leopard-skin chiefs and prophets are arbiters in questions in which cattle are the issue, or ritual agents in situations demanding sacrifice of ox or ram. Another 233 561 ritual specialist is the *wut ghok*, the Man of the Cattle. Likewise, in speaking of age-sets and age-grades we find ourselves des-

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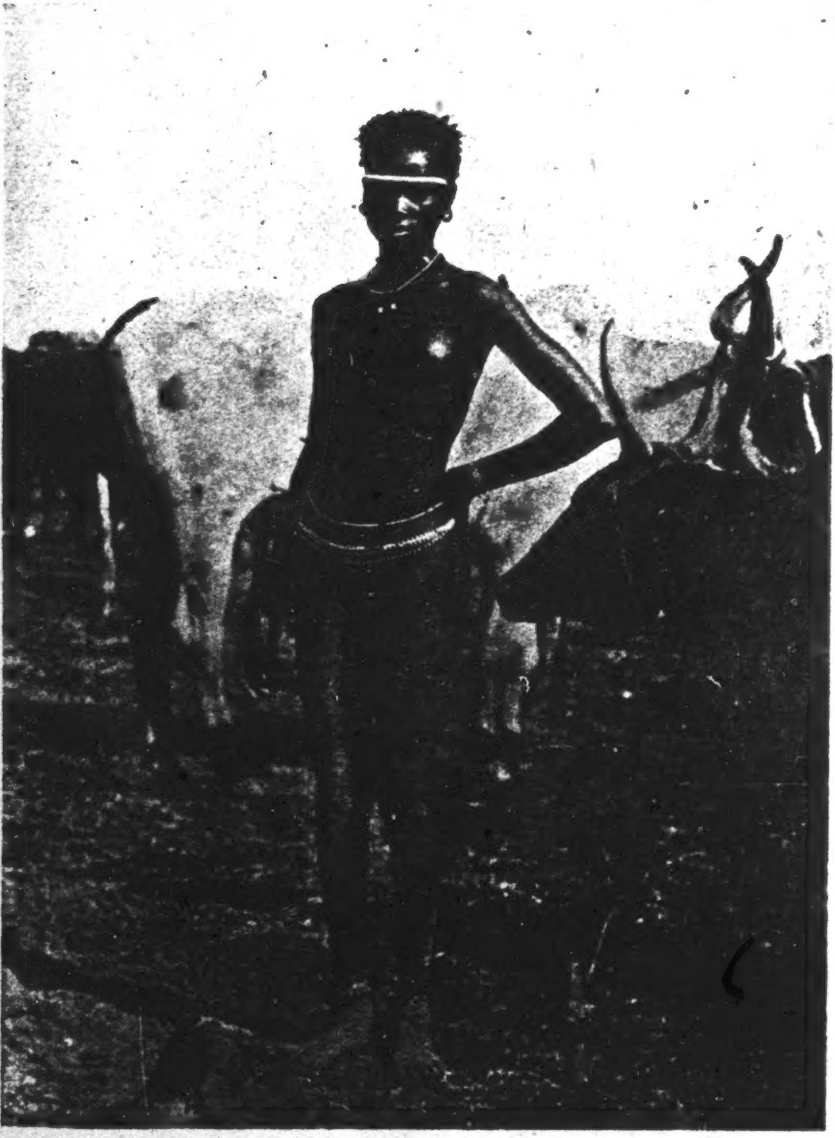
[1] Nuer interest in their cattle has been emphasized by early travellers in their country. *Vide* Marno, op. cit., p. 343; Werne, op. cit., p. 439; du Couret, op. cit., p. 82.

1; Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

PLATE II

291
301
304



Girl in kraal (Eastern Gaajok)

[Face p. 16]

233 561 cribing the relations of men to their cattle, for the change from boyhood to manhood is most clearly marked by a corresponding change in those relations at initiation.

233 621 Small local groups pasture their cattle in common and jointly defend their homes and herds. Their solidarity is most evident in the dry season when they live in a circle of windscreens around a common kraal, but it can also be seen in their wet season isolation. A single family or household cannot protect and herd their cattle alone and the cohesion of territorial groups must be considered in the light of this fact.

233 581 The network of kinship ties which links members of local communities is brought about by the operation of exogamous rules, often stated in terms of cattle. The union of marriage is brought about by payment of cattle and every phase of the ritual is marked by their transference or slaughter. The legal status of the partners and of their children is defined by cattle-rights and obligations.

233 421 Cattle are owned by families. While the head of the household is alive he has full rights of disposal over the herd, though his wives have rights of use in the cows and his sons own some of the oxen. As each son, in order of seniority, reaches the age of marriage he marries with cows from the herd. The next son will have to wait till the herd has reached its earlier strength before he can marry in his turn. When the head of the household dies the herd still remains the centre of family life and Nuer strongly deprecate breaking it up, at any rate till all the sons have married, for it is a common herd in which all have equal rights. When the sons are married they and their wives and children generally live in adjacent homesteads. In the early part of the dry season one sees a joint family of this kind living in a circle of windscreens around a common kraal, and in the big camps formed later in the year one finds them occupying a distinct section in the lines of windscreens. 233 583 The bond of cattle between brothers is continued long after each has a home and children of his own, for when a daughter of any one of them is married the others receive a large portion of her bride-wealth. Her grandparents, maternal uncles, paternal and maternal aunts, and even more distant relatives, also receive a portion. Kinship is customarily defined by reference to these payments, being most

233 583 clearly pointed at marriage, when movements of cattle from kraal to kraal are equivalent to lines on a genealogical chart. It is also emphasized by division of sacrificial meat among agnatic and cognatic relatives.

The importance of cattle in Nuer life and thought is further 233 553 exemplified in personal names. Men are frequently addressed by names that refer to the form and colour of their favourite oxen, and women take names from oxen and from the cows they milk. Even small boys call one another by ox-names when playing together in the pastures, a child usually taking his name from the bull-calf of the cow he and his mother milk. Often a man receives an ox-name or cow-name at birth. Sometimes the name of a man which is handed down to posterity is his ox-name and not his birth-name. Hence a Nuer genealogy may sound like an inventory of a kraal. The linguistic identification of a man with his favourite ox cannot fail to affect his attitude to the beast, and to Europeans the custom is the most striking evidence of the pastoral mentality of the Nuer.

233 775 Since cattle are a Nuer's most cherished possession, being an essential food-supply and the most important social asset, it is easy to understand why they play a foremost part in ritual. A man establishes contact with the ghosts and spirits through his cattle. If one is able to obtain the history of each cow in a kraal, one obtains at the same time not only an account of all the kinship links and affinities of the owners but also of all their mystical connexions. Cows are dedicated to the spirits of the lineages of the owner and of his wife and to any personal spirit that has at some time possessed either of them. Other beasts are dedicated to ghosts of the dead. By rubbing ashes along the back of a cow or ox one may get into touch with the spirit or ghost associated with it and ask it for assistance. Another way of communicating with the dead and with spirits is by sacrifice, and no Nuer ceremony is complete without the sacrifice of a ram, he-goat, or ox.

233 183 We have seen in a brief survey of some Nuer institutions and customs that most of their social behaviour directly concerns their cattle. A fuller study of their culture would show everywhere the same dominant interest in cattle, e.g. in their folklore. They are always talking about their beasts. I used some-

times to despair that I never discussed anything with the young 233
men but live stock and girls, and even the subject of girls led 183
inevitably to that of cattle. Start on whatever subject I would, and approach it from whatever angle, we would soon be speaking of cows and oxen, heifers and steers, rams and sheep, he-goats and she-goats, calves and lambs and kids. I have already indicated that this obsession—for such it seems to an outsider—is due not only to the great economic value of cattle but also to the fact that they are links in numerous social relationships. Nuer tend to define all social processes and relationships in terms of cattle. Their social idiom is a bovine idiom.

Consequently he who lives among Nuer and wishes to understand their social life must first master a vocabulary referring to cattle and to the life of the herds. Such complicated discussions as those which take place in negotiations of marriage, in ritual situations, and in legal disputes can only be followed when one understands the difficult cattle-terminology of colours, ages, sexes, and so forth.

Important though horticultural and piscatorial pursuits are in Nuer economy, pastoral pursuits take precedence because cattle not only have nutritive utility but have a general social value in other respects. I have mentioned a few situations in which this value is manifested, but have not recorded every role of cattle in Nuer culture, for they are significant in many social processes, including some I have mentioned, which lie outside the limited scope of this book. It seemed necessary to give an introductory sketch on these lines in order that the reader might understand that Nuer devotion to the herdsman's art is inspired by a range of interests far wider than simple need for food, and why cattle are a dominant value in their lives. We shall ask later how this value is related to environmental conditions and how far the two, taken together, help us to explain some characteristics of Nuer political structure.

II

Before the present century Nuer were far richer in cattle than 233
they are now and it is probable that they cultivated less millet. Their stock has been impaired by repeated outbreaks of rinderpest, which still decimate the herds. It was probably more

destructive in the past than now, though the attacks I witnessed were severe; but in the past the warlike Nuer could always restore their losses by raiding Dinka. All Nuer agree that in the last generation their herds were more considerable and that the payments of bride-wealth and blood-wealth were forty, and sometimes fifty to sixty, head of cattle, whereas to-day the kinsmen of a bride do not expect to receive more than twenty to thirty. At the present time I would say, on a general impression, that the Nuer are far richer in stock than the Shilluk, but not so prosperous as the more favoured of the Dinka tribes.

It was difficult to make a census of cattle, even in a small area, and Nuer would certainly have regarded such an attempt with repugnance. On the few estimates made I would reckon an average of ten head of cattle and five goats and sheep to the byre. A byre of the ordinary size cannot hold more than a dozen or so adult kine. As there are some eight persons to a byre the cattle probably do not greatly exceed the human population. Cows predominate and probably compose about two-thirds of the herds. Many plates in this book show the appearance of Nuer cattle. Nuer say that a very large hump shows Beir origin and that very long horns are evidence of Dinka stock.

Some tribes are richer in cattle than others. Lou country is considered especially suitable for raising stock and is renowned for its large herds. The Eastern Jikany were once very rich in cattle, but their herds are still recovering from losses in epidemics that forced the people to cultivate more extensively. Cattle are everywhere evenly distributed. Hardly any one is entirely without them, and no one is very rich. Although cattle are a form of wealth that can be accumulated, a man never possesses many more beasts than his byre will hold, because as soon as his herd is large enough he, or one of his family, marries. The herd is thereby reduced to two or three beasts and the next few years are spent in repairing its losses. Every household goes through these alternating periods of poverty and comparative wealth. Marriages and epidemics prevent accumulation of cattle and no disparity in wealth offends the democratic sentiment of the people.

When we come to examine the Nuer political system we shall keep in mind that till recent years they have probably been

more exclusively pastoral, and more nomadic, than at the 233
present time, and that the dwindling of their herds may partly explain their persistent aggressiveness.

III

Although cattle have many uses they are chiefly useful for 234
the milk they provide. Milk and millet (sorghum) are the staple 262
foods of the Nuer. In some parts of their country, especially among the Lou, the millet supply seldom lasts the whole year, and when it is exhausted people are dependent on milk and fish. At such times a family may be sustained by the milk of a single cow. In all parts the millet crop is uncertain and more or less severe famines are frequent, during which people rely on fish, wild roots, fruits, and seeds, but mainly on the milk of their herds. Even when millet is plentiful it is seldom eaten alone, for without milk, whey, or liquid cheese, Nuer find it stodgy, unpalatable, and, especially for children, indigestible. They 853
regard milk as essential for children, believing that they cannot be well and happy without it, and the needs of children are always the first to be satisfied even if, as happens in times of privation, their elders have to deny themselves. In Nuer eyes the happiest state is that in which a family possesses several lactating cows, for then the children are well-nourished and there is a surplus that can be devoted to cheese-making and to assisting kinsmen and entertaining guests. A household can generally obtain milk for its little children because a kinsman will lend them a lactating cow, or give them part of its milk, if they do not possess one. This kinship obligation is acknowledged by all and is generously fulfilled, because it is recognized that the needs of children are the concern of neighbours and relatives, and not of the parents alone. Occasionally, however, after an epidemic or, to a lesser degree, after two or three youths of the group have married, an entire hamlet, or even a whole village may experience scarcity. Sometimes, also, shortage is caused by a tendency for the cows of a village to cease lactating at about the same time.

Nuer value their cows according to the amount of milk they 234
give and they know the merits of each in this respect. The calves of a good milch cow are more highly prized than the

calves of a cow that gives little milk. A cow is never to them just a cow, but is always a good cow or a bad cow, and a Nuer who is owed a cow will not accept in payment of his debt one that does not meet with his approval. If you ask a Nuer in a cattle camp which are the best and worst cows in the herd he can tell you at once. In judging their points he pays little attention to those aesthetic qualities which please him in an ox, especially fatness, colour, and shape of horns, but he selects those which indicate a good milch cow: a broad loose back, prominent haunch bones, large milk-veins, and a much-wrinkled milk-bag. In judging the age of a cow he notes the depth of the trenches which run on either side of its rump towards the tail, the number and sharpness of its teeth, the firmness of its gait, and the number of rings on its horns. Nuer cows have the familiar angular and thin-fleshed characteristics of dairy stock.

Milking is performed twice daily by women, girls, and uninitiated boys. Men are forbidden to milk cows unless, as on journeys or war expeditions, there are no women or boys present. The milker squats by the cow and milks a single teat at a time into the narrow mouth of a bottle-necked gourd balanced on her thighs (see Plates III and V). She milks with thumb and first finger but, the other fingers being closed, the teat is to some extent pressed against the whole hand. It is both a squeezing and a pulling motion. The gourd is kept in position by the downward stroke of the hands which press it against the thighs. When a pot, or a gourd with a wider mouth, is used it is held between the knees and the milker squeezes two teats at a time. Occasionally one sees two girls milking a cow, one at either side. If a cow is restless a man may hold it still by putting his hand in its mouth and gripping its muzzle, and if it kicks, a noose is placed round its hind legs and they are pulled together (see Plate III). I was told that sometimes they ring the nose of a cow that is habitually restless during milking.

The process of milking is as follows. The calf is loosened and with its tethering-cord round its neck runs at once to its dam and begins violently butting her udder. This starts the flow of milk, and Nuer hold that if the calf were not first to suck the cow would hold up its milk. They do not pat the udder with the hand unless the calf is dead, for this is considered bad for the cow. When the calf has sucked a little it is dragged away, resisting stubbornly, and tethered to its dam's peg, where it rubs against her forelegs and she licks it. The girl now milks the first milking, known as

PLATE III

-234

Milking a restless cow (Lou)

[Faceing 22]

234 the *wic*. When the teats become soft and empty the calf is again loosened and the process is repeated. The second milking is called *tip indit*, the greater *tip*. As a rule there are only two milkings, but if it is a very good milch cow at the height of her lactation period the calf may once more be loosened and a third milking, called *tip intot*, the lesser *tip*, be taken. When the girl has finished milking she wipes her thighs and the milk-gourd with the cow's tail and loosens the calf to finish off what milk is left. The first milking takes longer time and produces more milk than the second, and the second more than the third. The morning yield is greater than the evening yield.

A series of measurements suggest that four to five pints a day may be regarded as a general average for Nuer cows during their lactation period, which lasts, on an average, about seven months. It must be remembered, however, that this is an estimate of the yield for human consumption. The calf gets its share before, during, and after the milking. It is possible, moreover, that, as Nuer declare, some cows hold up their milk for their calves, since the calves often suck for several minutes after milking before their dams refuse them by kicking them or moving so that they cannot reach their udders. Sometimes a small boy drags the calf away and milks the udders himself, licking the milk off his hands, or shares the teats with the calf, but as a rule the calf gets the remainder of the milk. The total yield may, therefore, be as high as seven to nine pints a day and it appears to be far richer than milk given by English cows. It is not surprising that the yield is small, because Nuer cows receive no artificial feeding, succulent pasturage is often difficult to obtain, and they have to endure great hardship. It must, moreover, be emphasized that whereas English dairy farmers require only milk, Nuer herdsmen require milk and also wish to preserve every calf. Human needs have to be subordinated to the needs of the calves, which are the first consideration if the herd is to be perpetuated.

Milk is consumed in various ways. Fresh milk is drunk, especially by children, and is also consumed with millet-porridge. Fresh milk is chiefly drunk by adults in the heat of the dry season when a
262 refreshing draught is most appreciated and food is scarce. Some milk is put aside, where it soon, very rapidly in hot weather, sours and thickens, in which condition it is relished. Nuer like to have

262 a gourd of sour milk always at hand in case visitors come. Part of
the daily yield is kept for making cheese, and if there are several
cows in lactation one may be reserved for this purpose. Milk for
252 churning is drawn into a different gourd to that used for drinking
milk. It is then transferred to a churning gourd (see Fig. 1), in
which it stands for several hours, and as churning gourds are not
cleaned, unless they smell bad, the acids which remain from the
previous churning curdle the milk. After standing it is churned

[415]

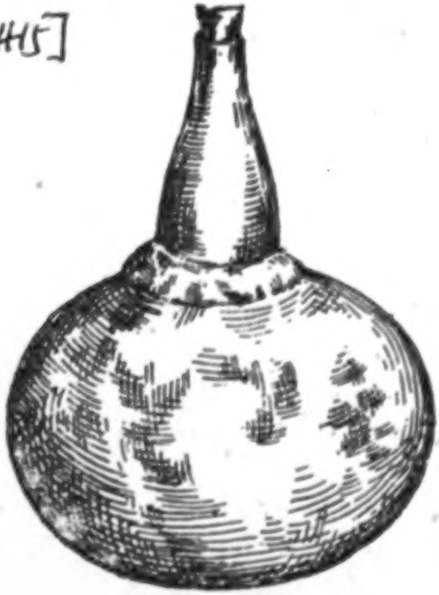


Fig. 1. Churning gourd.

by a woman, or girl, who sits on the ground with her legs stretched in front of her, and, raising the gourd, brings it down with a jerk on her thighs where she rocks it a few times before repeating her actions: a simple but lengthy way of churning. A small quantity of water is poured into the gourd when the curds are beginning to form to make them set well and to increase the quantity of whey, and some ox's urine may be added to give them consistency. When they have formed, the woman pours the milk into a cup-shaped gourd and scoops them out with a mussel shell into another gourd vessel which is hung up in a hut. The whey, mixed with fresh milk, is mainly drunk by women and boys. Every day they add to the supply of curds and now and again stir some ox's urine with them to prevent them from going bad. They may add to the supply for several weeks before the final boiling over a quick fire, which

turns the curds, *lieth in bor*, into solid deep yellow cheese, *lieth in* 252
car. After boiling for a time the liquid is poured into a gourd and
the oil on top is removed, to be used as a flavouring for porridge.
The cheese is suspended in a net from the roof of a hut in a round 251
gourd, a piece of the shell of which has been cut out so that cords
run through it and it acts as a sliding lid (see Fig. 2), and, if air
is excluded by a coating of cattle dung, it will keep in good condi-
tion for months. Milk may thus be stored in the form of cheese.
It is eaten with porridge and is also used for anointing the
body.

Sheep and goats are also milked in the mornings, but little 234
importance is attached to their yield, which is drunk by small
children and not used for dairy work. The woman milks and the
kids and lambs finish what is left in the udders. As they run with
their dams at pasture an evening milking is not taken; but during
the day hungry herdboys often squeeze the udders and lick the
milk off their hands.

Some points that arise from an account of milking and dairy-work deserve emphasis. (1) The present number and distribution of cattle do not permit the Nuer to lead an entirely pastoral life as they would like to do, and possibly did at one time. On a generous estimate the average daily yield to the byre is probably no more than twelve pints, or one and a half pints per person. A mixed economy is, therefore, necessary. (2) Furthermore the fluctuation in household resources, due to epidemics and transmission of bride-wealth, is further accentuated by the organic character of the staple diet, for cows only produce milk for a certain period after calving and the yield is not constant. It follows that a single family is not a self-sufficient unit, as far as milk is concerned, for it cannot always ensure an adequate supply. Therefore, since milk is considered essential, the economic unit must be larger than the simple family group. (3) Environmental conditions, as well as need for cereal food to supplement their milk diet, prevent Nuer from being entirely nomadic, but milk food enables them to lead a roving life for part of the year and gives them mobility and elusiveness, as their history shows and as has been recently demonstrated in the Government campaign against them. Milk requires neither storage nor transport, being daily renewed, but, on the other hand, involves a straight dependence on water and vegetation which not only permits, but compels, a wandering

234 life. Such a life nurtures the qualities of the shepherd—courage, love of fighting, and contempt of hunger and hardship—rather than shapes the industrious character of the peasant.

IV

262 Nuer are also interested in their cattle for meat, boiled and
782 roasted. They do not raise herds for slaughter, but sheep and
231 oxen are frequently sacrificed at ceremonies. There are always ghosts and spirits in whose honour a sacrifice would at any time be appropriate, and such sacrifices are generally long overdue, so that there does not lack a proper excuse for a feast when people desire one. Fertile cows are sacrificed in mortuary rites, but, otherwise, only barren females are killed. At sacrifices most people are interested more in the festal than the religious character of the rites. Sometimes, as at marriage ceremonies, the people who perform the ritual are different from those who eat the meat, while at other ceremonies there is a general scramble for the carcass. Desire for meat is shown without shame on these occasions, and Nuer recognize that some men sacrifice without due cause. In some years it is a custom in the rains for young men to join together at a homestead with the purpose of slaughtering oxen and gorging themselves with meat. Except on such occasions, however, people ought not to kill an ox solely for food—it being even thought that the ox may curse them—and they only do so in severe famine. The Lou, who are rich in cattle, have a reputation, of which they are rather ashamed, for killing oxen for meat. Nevertheless, nowhere in Nuerland are cattle ordinarily slaughtered for food, and a man would never kill even a sheep or goat merely on the grounds that he desired meat. On occasions of minor importance sheep or goats are sacrificed rather than oxen, as they are less valuable.

231 Any animal which dies a natural death is eaten. Even when
262 a youth's favourite ox dies he must be persuaded to partake of its flesh, and it is said that were he to refuse his spear might avenge the insult by cutting his foot or hand on some future occasion. Nuer are very fond of meat, and declare that on the death of a cow, 'The eyes and the heart are sad, but the teeth and the stomach are glad.' 'A man's stomach prays to God, independently of his mind, for such gifts.'

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[415]

Though oxen are sacrificed and eaten they are not valued only for these purposes, but also for display and for the prestige their possession confers. Colour and shape of horns are significant, but the essential qualities are bigness and fatness, it being considered especially important that the haunch bones should not be apparent. Nuer admire a large hump which wobbles when the animal walks, and to exaggerate this character they often manipulate the hump shortly after birth.

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Like other pastoral peoples in East Africa the Nuer extract blood from the necks of their cattle, and this is a supplementary article of diet in dry season camps, where one may generally see at least one cow bled each evening. Cows are bled for culinary purposes more frequently than oxen. The operation, called *bar*, consists of tying a cord tightly round a cow's neck so that the veins stand out and one of them can be stabbed, on the head side of the cord, with a small knife bound with cord or grass to prevent it entering too deeply. The blood spurts out, and when a large gourd has been filled they loosen the cord and it ceases to flow. Some dung is smeared over the wound. If one examines the neck of a cow one sees a row of small cicatrices. Cows appear to be a little giddy after the operation and may totter slightly, but otherwise seem none

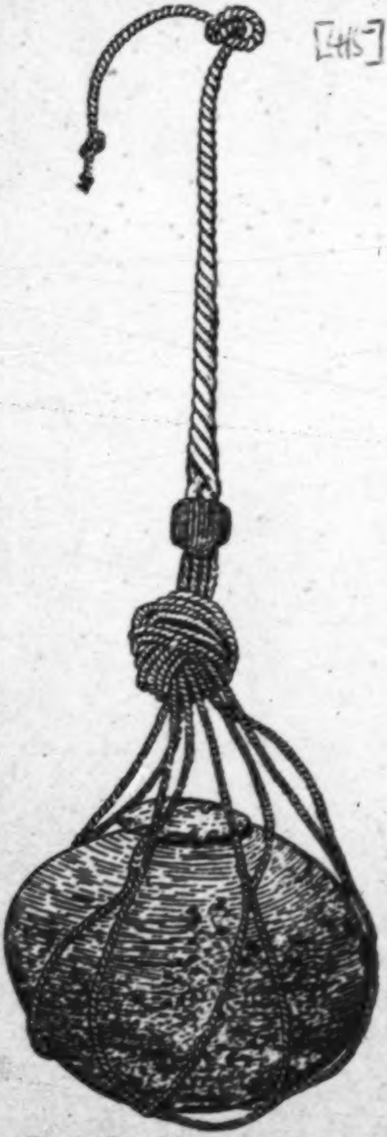

FIG. 2. Gourd for storing cheese.

231 the worse for their experience. Indeed, it may well be, as Nuer
262 assert, that they are the better for it, for they lead a sluggish life.
[252] The blood is boiled by women till it is fairly consistent and can be
used as a meat flavouring with porridge; or the men let it stand till it coagulates into a solid block, and, after roasting it in the embers of a fire, cut it up and eat it.

231 Nuer do not regard the blood of cows as a staple article of diet
825 and it does not play an important part in their cuisine. Indeed, they say that they do not perform the operation to acquire food, though they confess that roasted blood is delicious, but for the benefit of the cows. Bleeding is designed to cure a cow of any unfitness by letting out the bad blood of the sickness. Also, Nuer say, it makes the cow fat, for next day it will be more lively and graze avidly. Bleeding, moreover, in their opinion, decreases the desire of a cow to be served. Nuer say that if a cow is served too frequently it may eventually become barren, whereas, if it is bled now and again, it will only require to be served once and will be in calf. Cattle are sometimes bled for medical reasons in the rainy season, when people may be so replete that the blood is given to the boys of the kraal and to the dogs. Sometimes they make incisions in the noses of calves and let the blood flow to the ground in order to make them fat. I have seen Nuer scarify their own legs and the small of their backs to induce fleetness and strength.

231 The following two points seem to us to be significant. (1)
262 Whilst Nuer normally do not kill their stock for food, the end
of every beast is, in fact, the pot, so that they obtain sufficient
[224] meat to satisfy their craving and have no pressing need to hunt wild animals, an activity in which they engage little. (2) Except when epidemics are rife the usual occasions of eating meat are ritual and it is the festal character of rites which gives them much of their significance in the life of the people.

V

237 Apart from milk, meat, and blood, cattle furnish Nuer with
231 numerous household necessities, and when we consider how few are their possessions we can appreciate the importance of cattle as raw material. The bodies and bodily products of cattle have the following uses:

237 Their skins are used for beds, trays, for carrying fuel (Plate XVII), cord for tethering and other purposes, flails (Fig. 15), leather collars for oxen (Fig. 4), and for the tympana of drums. They are employed in the manufacture of pipes, spears, shields,

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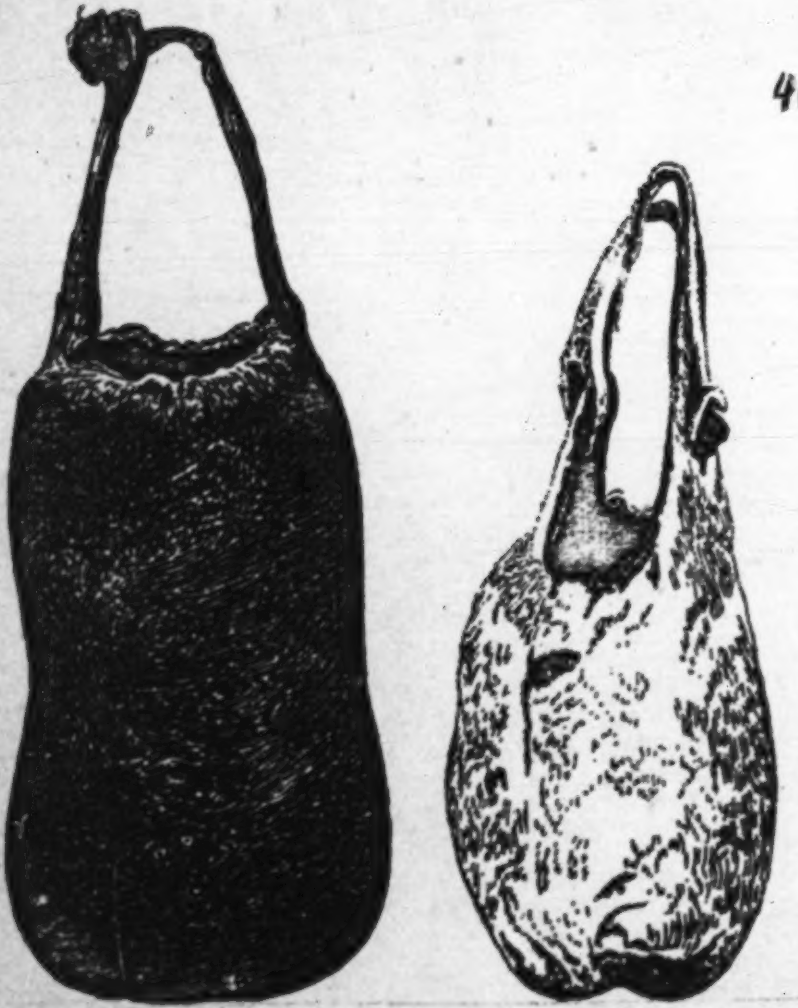

FIG. 3. Bags made from the scrota of a bull and a giraffe.

[p. 29]

237 snuff-containers, &c. The scrota of bulls are made into bags to contain tobacco, spoons, and other small objects (Fig. 3). Tail-hairs are made into tassels used as dance ornaments by girls and to decorate the horns of favourite oxen (Plate IV). Their bones are used for the manufacture of armlets, and as beaters, pounders, and scrapers. Their horns are cut into spoons (Fig. 14) and are used in the construction of harpoons.

Their dung is used for fuel and for plastering walls, floors, and the outsides of straw huts in cattle camps. It is also employed as a plaster in minor technological processes and to protect wounds. The ashes of burnt dung are rubbed over mens' bodies, and are used to dye and straighten the hair, as a mouth wash and tooth powder, in the preparation of sleeping-skins and leather bags, and for various ritual purposes. Their urine is used in churning and cheese-making, in the preparation of gourd-utensils, for tanning leather, and for bathing face and hands.

The skins of sheep and goats are worn as loin garments by married women (Plate XXIII (*a*)), used as rugs to sit on, made into bags for storing tobacco and millet, and are cut into strips to be tied round their ankles by youths when dancing. Their dung and urine are not utilized.

231
237 The Bedouin Arab has been called the parasite of the camel. With some justice the Nuer might be called the parasite of the cow. It may, however, seem that the list we have compiled does not cover a very wide range of uses, but so simple is Nuer material culture that it accounts for a very considerable part of their technology and contains items on which they are highly dependent, e.g. the use of dung as fuel in a country where it is difficult to obtain sufficient vegetable fuel for cooking, let alone for the large fires that burn day and night in every byre and windscreen.

231 We have seen that apart from their many social uses Nuer are directly concerned with cattle as producers of two essential articles of diet, milk and meat. We now perceive that the economic value of cattle is more extensive. Taking into consideration also the more general social value of cattle, briefly indicated in Section I,* we may already note that there is over-emphasis on a single object, which dominates all other interests and is consistent with those qualities of simplicity, single-mindedness, and conservatism, so characteristic of pastoral peoples.

*[— pp. 16-19, cat. 116 —Analyst]

PLATE IV

Ox with tassels hanging from its horns (Lou)

[Face p.30]

VI

233 In later chapters we shall describe how the needs of cattle, water, pasturage, protection from carnivorous beasts and biting insects, and so forth, are attended to, and show in what manner they determine human routine and affect social relations. Leaving these broader issues on one side, we ask here whether the Nuer, who are so reliant on their cattle and who value them so highly, are competent herdsmen. It is unnecessary to state that they give their beasts every attention that their knowledge allows, but it is pertinent to inquire whether their knowledge suffices. It was especially noted where Nuer practice is not in accord with the conventions of farming, and the reasons for the divergence were investigated. A few of the more evident difficulties and some general observations on Nuer husbandry are recorded below.

1. Since the cows are not brought back to the kraals at midday the smaller calves must go without nourishment for many hours each day. However, Capt. H. B. Williams, Director of the Sudan Veterinary Department, tells me that Nuer oxen have the reputation of being as good as any in the Sudan, so that their development as young calves cannot be seriously arrested. In the rains the cows are seldom milked before 9 to 10 a.m. and again at about 5 p.m., but in the dry season they may be taken to pasture as early as 8 a.m. and not return till about 5.30 p.m., so that they cannot suckle their calves for about ten hours. However, this long interval is not easily avoided, for in the dry season the grazing grounds are often distant and owing to lack of good pasturage the cattle require longer to feed than in the rains. In the rains it would be a simple matter to pasture the herd at daybreak and bring it home at midday, as many East African peoples do, for the cows to suckle their calves and chew the cud. But Nuer say that when the cattle come out of their hot smoky byres they like to rest a while in the kraal before going to pasture, and their lethargy, which contrasts with their eagerness to graze after a night in the open in dry season camps, seems to justify this statement. Nuer realize that the heat and smoke of byres are bad for the cattle, but they consider mosquitoes worse.

[p. 32 contains no textual material]

1; Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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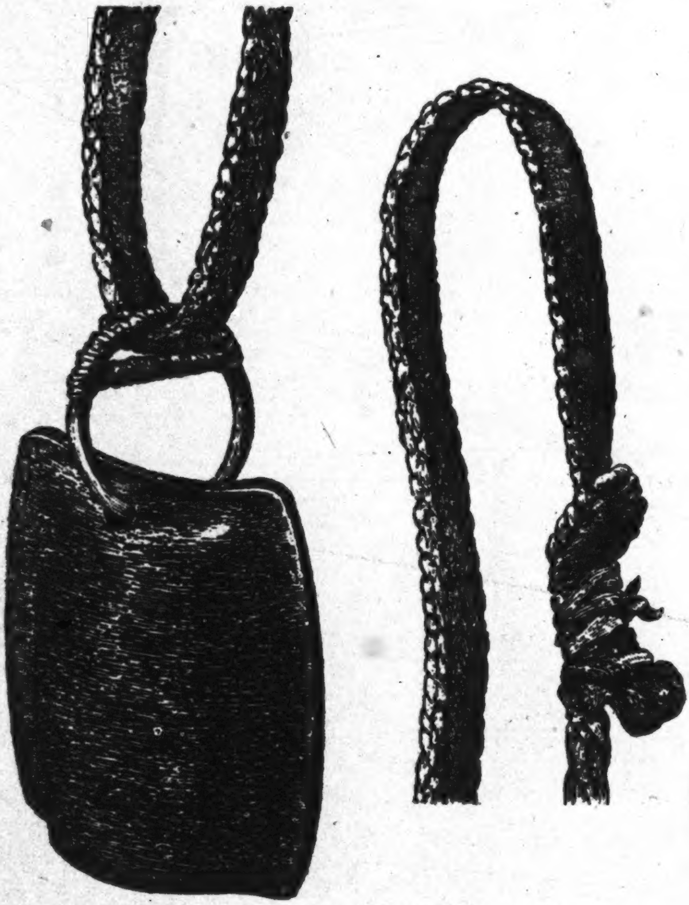

FIG. 4. Ox-bell and collar.

[p. 32]

Also by waiting till the dew has evaporated they consider they 233
lessen the risk of digestive troubles, for in the rains the ground is cold and damp till a late hour. A further reason for keeping the cattle late in the kraals is that if they are loosened early they soon graze to repletion and begin to wander in all directions, since they are not usually herded in the rains.

2. It at once strikes a European that the condition of drinking 233
water at periods of the dry season leaves much to be desired, 312
especially if he has to drink it himself. Sometimes the pools have almost dried up and contain foul, even slimy, water which men and cattle drink. I have wondered why they do not move sooner from these small pools, such as that shown on Plate XXI (*b*), around which they camp in the early drought, to the rivers and lakes where they make their final concentrations, but I do not distrust their judgement, for they are fully aware that dirty water is neither palatable to, nor good for, the cattle, and when circumstances permit they are at pains to ensure that they are supplied with clean water as often as they require it. In moving camp they have to take into account a number of desiderata: pasturage, fishing, the harvest of *Balanites aegyptiaca*, the second millet harvest, &c., besides conditions of water.

3. Unlike some East African peoples Nuer do not keep too 233
many entire animals. If they err at all it is in keeping too few. On the limited observations made it was estimated that there is one adult bull to about thirty or forty adult cows. Nuer try to select as stud bulls the calves of their best milch cows so that they may breed good milch cows from them. They say that if they did not castrate most of the bull calves the cows would get no peace and there would be constant fighting in the kraals and commotion in the byres. A calf is not castrated till it is about eighteen months to two years old: 'When its dam has had another calf and a third is in its womb.' It is thrown, the scrotum is cut with a spear, and the testicles drawn out and severed. There is little loss of blood and the animal soon recovers. A calf may be castrated for sacrificial purposes at any time, but otherwise Nuer prefer to perform the operation in the dry season for there is less chance of inflammation than in the rains. Bulls are not discouraged from fighting unless they belong to the same herd, and fights are often cited in

tradition as the cause of fission and migration of lineages. A very large number of steers and oxen are slaughtered in sacrifices.

4. Heifers are not served till their third year. Nuer know when a cow is on heat by its behaviour in the kraal: it is restless, lows, swishes its tail, sniffs at the vulvas of other cows, and tries to mount them. If a cow has mated in the grazing grounds—for bulls run with the herd—the first signs of pregnancy are said to be vulvar changes. If you ask Nuer when a cow which has been served at a certain time will calve they can at once, and accurately, tell you. They say that if a cow has had no serious illness it will bear about eight calves.

In my experience there is very slight mortality among calves. Nuer give them every attention. When a cow is seen to be about to calve for the first time its owner sits up with it all night, or accompanies it to pasture, to assist delivery. An experienced cow is left to drop its calf itself, but a man is usually present to assist if it is in trouble. He must be present if it calves in the bush, because the calf is too weak to follow its dam, which will stay with it, and they may become separated from the herd and fall a prey to wild beasts. If a calf dies in the womb Nuer try to remove it, and when it is necessary to turn it in the womb they perform this operation. If the afterbirth does not fall, or if the cow does not lick its calf, they administer medicines. When a calf dies they resort to various devices to persuade its dam to give milk. They stuff the head with straw (see Fig. 5), and rub some of the dam's urine on it; or, especially when a cow aborts, they stuff the whole calf, insert stumps of wood to act as legs, and place it in front of its dam and push its head against her teats, while they gently squeeze and pull them and a boy blows up the vagina.

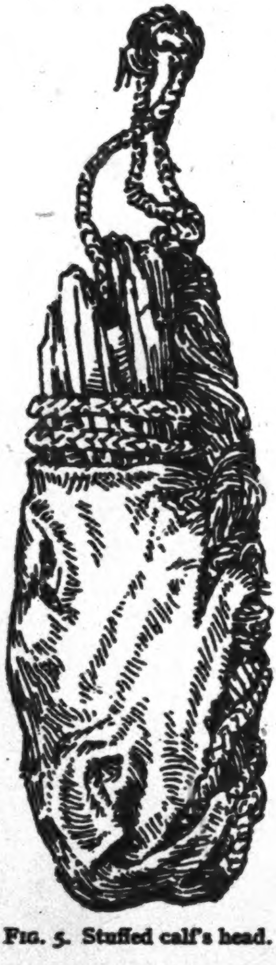

Fig. 5. Stuffed calf's head.

Nuer say that if a calf is only a day or two old and its dam dies it will also die, but once it knows the *cak tin bor*, 'the white milk' which follows the colostrum, it can be saved. It is fed by hand from a small gourd with a funnel mouth and efforts are made to get another cow in lactation to suckle it. Since Nuer believe, erroneously it seems, that it is dangerous for a calf to drink the discoloured milk at the top of the colostrum, they milk this off before allowing the calf to suck, and if by inadvertence it sucks first they administer a purgative. They regard it as more serious if there is any blood in the milk.

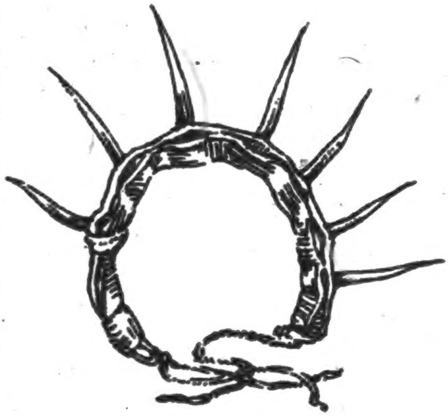

FIG. 6. Calf's weaning ring.

For the first three or four days a calf sucks all its dam's milk except the part drawn off. Then close kinsmen, who live near by, are summoned to eat porridge over which is poured the first milk taken for human consumption. At this ceremony the end hairs of the calf's tail are cut off and its owner spits on them and waves them over the back of the dam, for otherwise the calf will sicken because it resents people stealing its milk. Afterwards, however, they can still say, 'We do not yet share with its calf', for they take very little milk for the first fortnight in order to give it a chance to get strong and for its teeth to harden. When the calf is stronger they take more milk and they then say that the calf shares (*buth*) the milk with men. It continues to suck till its dam is again in calf and refuses it. Weaning devices are not as a rule employed, but if the dam suckles when it is pregnant and it is found impracticable to keep it apart from its calf in the pastures they place a ring of thorns round the calf's muzzle (Fig. 6), which allows it to graze but prevents it from sucking, for the thorns prick the dam's udder and she kicks it aside. It will be seen from this account how Nuer solve the herdsman's problem of making cows provide for their masters without depriving their calves of essential nourishment.

Small calves, after the adult herd has gone to the grazing grounds, are housed till the late afternoon in byres in wet-season villages, and tethered in the shade of a tree in dry-season camps.

233 They are watered during the afternoon, and boys bring them grasses, especially *poon* (*Oryza Barthii*), which is very fattening. They begin to go to pasture with the older calves, under the care of herdboys, in about their third month and are kept apart from their dams by being driven in the opposite direction to that taken earlier in the day by the adult herd. They run with the herd when they are about a year old, by which time their dams are again in calf.

We shall have opportunities for noting further the attention Nuer give to their cattle and the wisdom of their methods. I have merely given in this section a few examples to illustrate a general conclusion reached in the course of my study: that Nuer cattle husbandry could not in any important particular be improved in their present oecological relations; that, consequently, more knowledge than they possess would in no way assist them; and that, as will be shown, were it not for their unceasing vigilance and care the cattle would not survive the harsh conditions of their environment.

VII

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It has been remarked that the Nuer might be called parasites of the cow, but it might be said with equal force that the cow is a parasite of the Nuer, whose lives are spent in ensuring its welfare. They build byres, kindle fires, and clean kraals for its comfort; move from villages to camps, from camp to camp, and from camps back to villages, for its health; defy wild beasts for its protection; and fashion ornaments for its adornment. It lives its gentle, indolent, sluggish life thanks to the Nuer's devotion. In truth the relationship is symbiotic: cattle and men sustain life by their reciprocal services to one another. In this intimate symbiotic relationship men and beasts form a single community of the closest kind. In a few paragraphs I direct attention to this intimacy.

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The men wake about dawn at camp in the midst of their cattle and sit contentedly watching them till milking is finished. They then either take them to pasture and spend the day watching them graze, driving them to water, composing songs about them, and bringing them back to camp, or they remain in the kraal to drink their milk, make tethering-cords and ornaments

PLATE V

234

Girl milking (Lou)

[Face p. 36]

181 233 512 [515] for them, water and in other ways care for their calves, clean their kraal, and dry their dung for fuel. Nuer wash their hands and faces in the urine of the cattle, especially when cows urinate during milking, drink their milk and blood, and sleep on their hides by the side of their smouldering dung. They cover their bodies, dress their hair, and clean their teeth with the ashes of cattle dung, and eat their food with spoons made from their horns. When the cattle return in the evening they tether each beast to its peg with cords made from the skins of their dead companions and sit in the windscreens to contemplate them and to watch them being milked. A man knows each animal of his herd and of the herds of his neighbours and kinsmen: its colour, the shape of its horns, its peculiarities, the number of its teats, the amount of milk it gives, its history, its ancestry and its progeny. Miss Soule tells me that most Nuer know the points of the dam and grand-dam of a beast and that some know the points of its forebears up to five generations of ascent. A Nuer knows the habits of all his oxen, how one bellows in the evenings, how another likes to lead the herd on its return to camp, and how another tosses its head more than the rest are wont to do. He knows which cows are restless during milking, which are troublesome with their calves, which like to drink on the way to pasture, and so forth.

233 181 If he is a young man he gets a boy to lead his favourite ox, after which he takes his name, round the camp in the morning and leaps and sings behind it; and often at night he walks among the cattle ringing an ox-bell and singing the praises of his kinsmen, his sweethearts, and his oxen. When his ox comes home in the evening he pets it, rubs ashes on its back, removes ticks from its belly and scrotum, and picks adherent dung from its anus. He tethers it in front of his windscreen so that he can see it if he wakes, for no sight so fills a Nuer with contentment and pride as his oxen. The more he can display the happier he is, and to make them more attractive he decorates their horns with long tassels, which he can admire as they toss their heads and shake them on their return to camp, and their necks with bells, which tinkle in the pastures. Even the bull calves are adorned by their boy-owners with wooden beads and bells (Fig. 13). The horns of young bulls, destined to be

233 181 castrated later, are generally cut so that they will grow in a shape that pleases their masters. The operation, called *ngat*, is probably performed towards the end of their first year and usually takes place in the dry season, as it is said that a steer may die if its horns are cut in the rains. The animal is thrown and held down while its horns are cut through obliquely with a spear. They grow against the cut. The beasts appear to suffer much pain during the operation and I have sometimes heard Nuer compare their ordeal to the initiation of youths into manhood.

When a Nuer mentions an ox his habitual moroseness leaves him and he speaks with enthusiasm, throwing up his arms to show you how its horns are trained. 'I have a fine ox', he says, 'a brindled ox with a large white splash on its back and with one horn trained over its muzzle'—and up go his hands, one above his head and the other bent at the elbow across his face. In singing and dancing they call out the names of their oxen and hold their arms in imitation of their horns.

233 181 854 The attitude towards cattle varies with varying situations in social life and with changes in social development. As soon as children can crawl they are brought into close intimacy with the flocks and herds. The kraal is their playground and they are generally smeared with dung in which they roll and tumble. The calves and sheep and goats are their companions in play and they pull them about and sprawl in the midst of them. Their feelings about the animals are probably dominated by desire for food, for the cows, ewes, and she-goats directly satisfy their hunger, often suckling them. As soon as a baby can drink animal's milk its mother carries it to the sheep and goats and gives it warm milk to drink straight from the udders.

233 181 857 868 The games of rather older children of both sexes centre round cattle. They build byres of sand in camps and of moistened ashes or mud in villages, and fill the toy kraals with fine mud cows and oxen (Fig. 7), with which they play at herding and marriage. The first tasks of childhood concern cattle. Very small children hold the sheep and goats while their mothers milk them, and when their mothers milk the cows they carry the gourds and pull the calves away from the udders and tether them in front of their dams. They collect urine in gourds and

wash themselves in it. When they are a little older and stronger they have to clean the byres and kraals, assist in the milking, and herd the small calves and the sheep and goats at pasture. 233 181 857 865

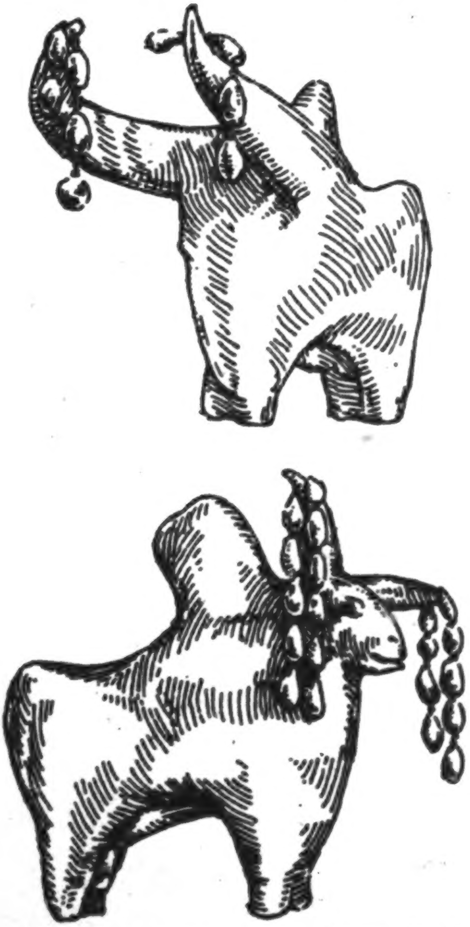

FIG. 7. Mud figures of oxen decorated with tassels.

Food and play contacts with the cattle have changed to labour contacts. At this age the interests of the sexes in cattle begin to diverge and the divergence becomes more apparent as they grow up. The labour of girls and women is restricted to the byres and the kraals and is concerned mostly with the cows, while boys herd the calves at pasture, as well as assisting in the kraal, 181 233 462

181 and after initiation they herd the adult cattle and in the kraal
233 give their attention mainly to the oxen. The women are
462 dairy-maids; the men herdsmen. Moreover, to a girl the cows are essentially providers of milk and cheese and they remain such when she grows up and is married and milks and churns for her husband's people, whereas to a boy they are part of the
[421] family herd in which he has property rights. They have entered the herd on the marriage of his kinswomen and one day he will marry with them. A girl is separated from the herd on marriage; a boy remains as its owner. When a boy becomes a youth and is initiated into manhood the cattle become something more than food and the cause of labour. They are also a means of display and marriage. It is only when a man marries and has children and an independent household and herd, when he has become an elder and man of position, that he often uses cattle as sacrifices, invests them with a sacred significance, and employs them in ritual.

181 The Nuer and his herd form a corporate community with solidarity of interests, to serve which the lives of both are
233 adjusted, and their symbiotic relationship is one of close physical contact. The cattle are docile and readily respond to human care and guidance. No high barriers of culture divide men from beasts in their common home, but the stark nakedness of Nuer amid their cattle and the intimacy of their contact with them present a classic picture of savagery. I ask the reader to look at some of the illustrations, for example the Frontispiece and Plates III, V, and XVII, which will convey to him better than I can do in words the crudity of kraal life.

Cattle are not only an object of absorbing interest to Nuer, having great economic utility and social value, but they live in the closest possible association with them. Moreover, irrespective of use, they are in themselves a cultural end, and the mere possession of, and proximity to, them gives a man his heart's desire. On them are concentrated his immediate interests and his farthest ambitions. More than anything else they determine his daily actions and dominate his attention. We have remarked on the over-emphasis on cattle produced by their wide range of social and economic uses. So many physical, psychological, and social requirements can be satisfied from

this one source that Nuer attention, instead of being diffused in 181
a variety of directions, tends, with undue exclusiveness, to be 233
focused on this single object and to be introvertive, since the object has a certain identity with themselves. We will now examine briefly some linguistic material wherein we shall perceive further evidence of this hypertrophy of a single interest and of the identification of men with cattle to which I have alluded.

VIII

Linguistic profusion in particular departments of life is one 192
of the signs by which one quickly judges the direction and 231
strength of a people's interests. It is for that reason, rather than for its intrinsic importance, that we draw the reader's attention to the volume and variety of the Nuer cattle vocabulary. Like all the pastoral Nilotes they use an enormous number of words and phrases about cattle and the tasks of herding and dairy-work, and from this vast assortment we select for comment a single class: the terms by which they describe cattle, chiefly by reference to their colours.[1] These terms are more than a linguistic technique which enables Nuer to speak of cattle with precision in situations of practical husbandry and in the many social contexts in which they figure, for they establish associations on the one hand between wild creatures and cattle and on the other hand between cattle and their masters; they furnish certain ritual categories; and they greatly enrich the language of poetry.

In naming a Nuer cow one has to notice its colours and the way 192
in which they are distributed on its body. When it is not of one 231
colour the distribution of colours is the significant character by 552
which one names it. There are ten principal colour terms: white (*bor*), black (*car*), brown (*lual*), chestnut (*dol*), tawny (*yan*), mouse-grey (*lou*), bay (*thiang*), sandy-grey (*lith*), blue and strawberry roan (*yil*), and chocolate (*gwir*). When a cow is of a single colour it is described by one of these terms. An animal may combine two or more colours, but a combination of more than two, known as *cuany*, is very rare. Normally there is a combination of white with one other colour and twelve common distributions of this com-

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[1] I have recorded some information on this neglected subject among a neighbouring people in 'Imagery in Ngok Dinka Cattle-Names', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, 1934.

[pp. 42-43 contain no textual material]

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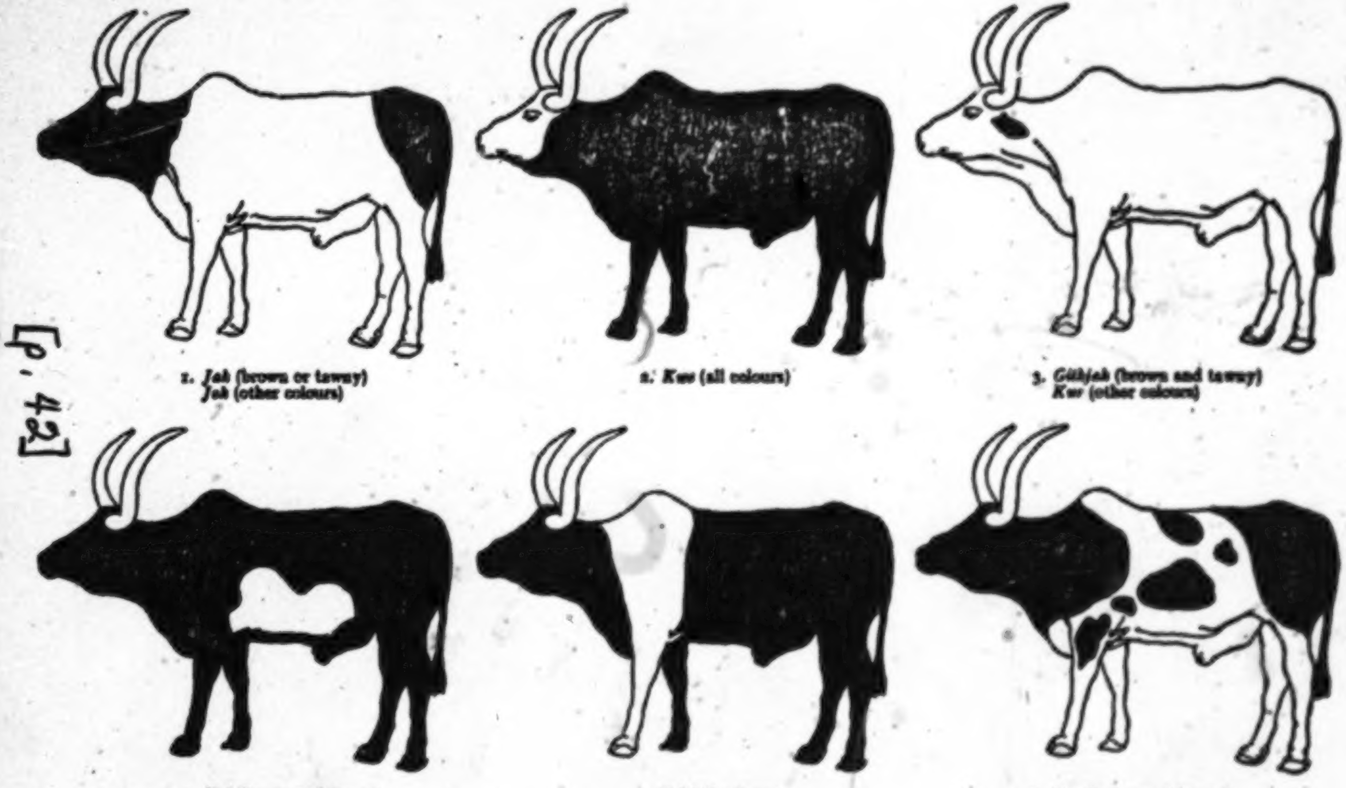
[p. 42]



1. *Jak* (brown or tawny)
Jak (other colours)

2. *Kwe* (all colours)

3. *Gukjak* (brown and tawny)
Kur (other colours)

4. *Kal* (brown and tawny)
Bil (other colours)

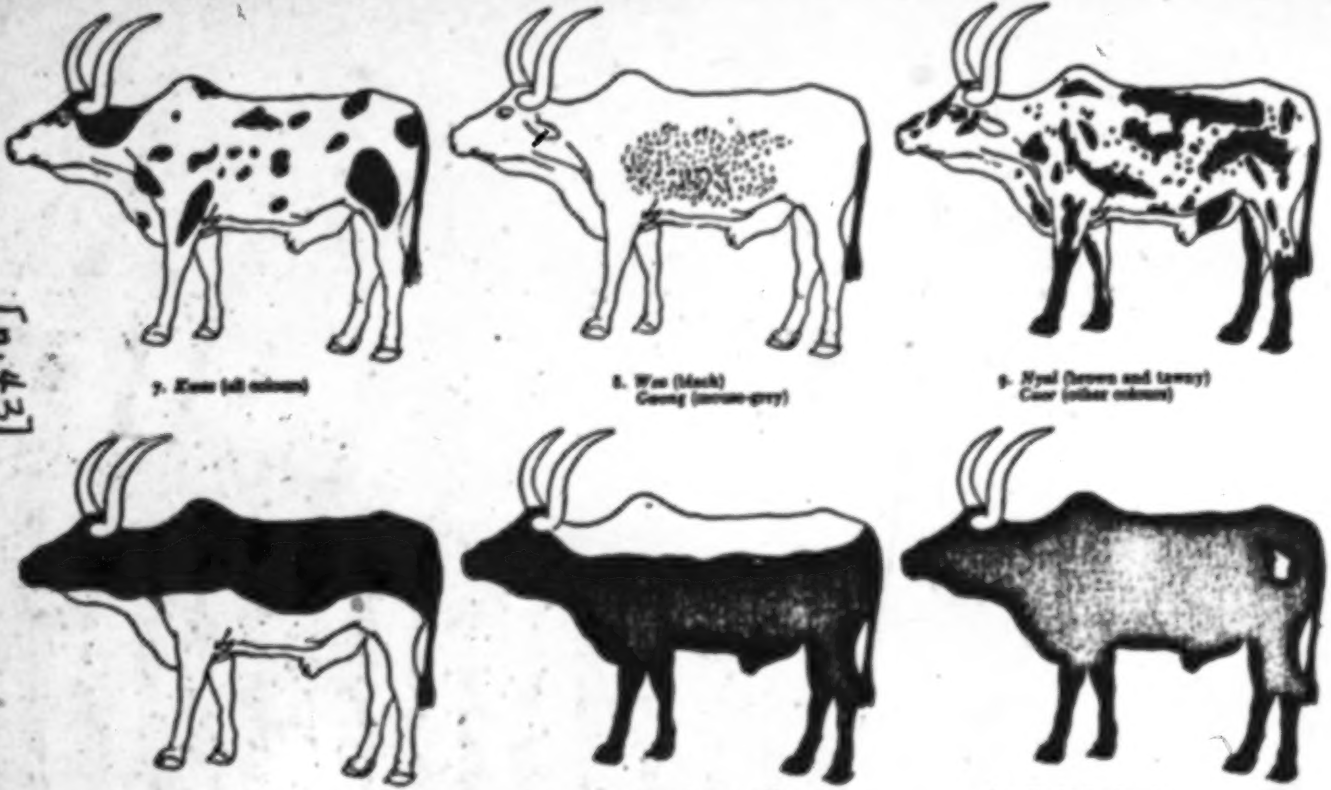
5. *Rol* (all colours)

6. *Par* (brown and tawny)
Rial (other colours)

FIG. 8. Diagrammatic representation of colour distributions.

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

[p.43]



7. *Kwac* (all colours)

8. *Wa* (black)
Gwong (mouse-grey)

9. *Nyal* (brown and tawny)
Cuor (other colours)

10. *Reng* (all colours

11. *Ding* (brown and tawny)
Kar (other colour

12. *Kwei* (all colours)

FIG. 9. Diagrammatic representation of colour distributions.

192
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192 bination are shown in Figs. 8 and 9. There are, however, many
231 more combinations, at least twenty-seven, one of the commonest
552 being varieties of a striped or brindled coat (*nyang*).

In describing a beast one often denotes both the form of distribution and the colour that is combined with white. Thus an ox may be entirely mouse-grey (*lou*); have a mainly mouse-grey colour with a white face (*kwe looka*), white back (*kar looka*), white splash on barrel (*bil looka*), white shoulder (*rol looka*), or white belly (*reng looka*): be brindled mouse-grey (*nyang looka*): be white with large mouse-grey patches (*rial looka*), medium mouse-grey patches (*kwac looka*), or a mouse-grey rump (*jok looka*), &c. There are at least a dozen terms describing different combinations of white and mouse-grey and there are a similar number of terms for a combination of white with each of the other colours. A further example is given to illustrate the wide range of variations: a white shoulder and foreleg (*rol*) may be found on a cow of any colour, e.g. *rol cara*, *rol yan*, *rol thiang*, *rol yili*, &c. There may also be a combination of one form of distribution with another and, in this case, the two combinations constitute the terms of reference and there is no need to denote the colouring that occurs in them, e.g. a white shoulder and foreleg (*rol*) may be combined with a white face (*kwe roal*), black spots (*rol kwac*), speckling (*rol cuor*), brown patches (*rol paara*), white back (*kar roal*), white face and black ears (*kur roal*), &c. There are at least twenty-five terms which include the *rol* distribution, and the other distributions likewise have wide ranges of combinations with colours and with one another.

As I shall elsewhere, and at length, analyse the principles of colour terminology and abstract the rules of nomenclature,[1] I need no more than remark here that it is evident from the few examples cited that there are several hundred colour permutations.

Some colours and combinations of colours are associated with animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, and this association is often indicated by secondary terms of reference and by ritual usages, e.g. *lou* (mouse-grey) is the bustard, *nyang* (striped) is the crocodile, *lith* (sandy-grey) is associated with *manlieth*, the grey kestrel, *thiang* (bay) is the tiang, *dwai* (brown with white stripes) is the female sitatunga, *kwe* (white-faced) is the fish eagle, *kwac* (spotted) is the leopard, *cuor* (speckled) is the vulture, *gwong* (spotted) is the guinea-fowl, *nyal* (brown-spotted) is the python, &c. These linguistic identifications and other colour associations lead to many

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[1] 'Nuer Cattle Terms', to appear in *Sudan Notes and Records*.

fanciful elaborations of nomenclature, e.g. a black ox may be 192
called *rual mim*, charcoal-burning or *won car*, dark clouds; a brown 552
ox *riem dol*, red blood, or *rir dol*, red tree-cobra; a blue roan ox 231
bany yiel after the blue heron; a mouse-grey ox *duk lou*, the shady
gloom of forests, &c. These fancy names add greatly to the list of
Nuer cattle terms.

Besides the vast vocabulary which refers to colours, distribution of colours, and colour associations, cattle can also be described by the shape of their horns and, as the horns of oxen are trained, there are at least six common designations in use besides several fancy names. Words denoting shape of horns add considerably to the number of permutations, for they can be combined with many of the colour and distribution terms, e.g. a sandy-grey cow with horns which almost meet in a curve above the head is a *duot lieth*, a shorthorn with *rial* markings is a *cot rial*, a brindled ox with one horn trained across its face is a *gut nyang*, &c. The ears of cattle, sheep, and goats are often cut in different shapes and it is permissible, and with sheep and goats usual, to describe them by reference to these incisions. Sheep and goats have very different mixtures of colours from those one finds among cattle, but the same terms can be used to cover all combinations, because they are never exact descriptions of colour dispositions but represent ideal distributions, to one or other of which any actual disposition approximates.

A further range of permutations is created by prefixes which denote the sex or age of an animal, e.g. *tut*, bull, *yang*, cow, *thak*, ox, *nac*, heifer, *ruath*, male calf, *dou*, female calf, *hol*, calf which has not yet begun to graze, and so forth. Thus one may speak of a *tut ma kar looka*, *dou ma rial*, *thak ma cuany*, &c. Indeed, if we were to count every possible mode of referring to animals of the flocks and herds they would be found to number several thousand expressions—an imposing and complicated system of ramifications which bears eloquent witness to the social value of cattle.

Furthermore, as we have mentioned, every man takes one of 551
his names from the term by which one of his oxen is described, and these ox-names are the preferred salutations among age-mates. A youth generally takes his first ox-name from the beast his father gives him at his initiation, but he may later

551 take further names from any oxen of his herd which delight him. Men salute one another with these names and shower them, with many a fanciful elaboration, on their companions at dances. They also chant them when they display themselves with their oxen in camps, sing them in their poems, and shout them when they spear men, animals, or fish.

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192
A man may be called by the identical name of his ox, e.g. Bi(l)rial, Kwac(c)uor, Werkwac, and so forth, but generally one part of the term is dropped and the other part is prefixed by a new term, usually descriptive of some ornament worn by the ox or some characteristic of it, not employed in defining its own name, e.g. *luth*, a large bell (Fig. 4), *gier*, a small bell, *lue*, a long tassel, *dhuor*, a short tassel (Plate IV), *wak*, the tinkling of an ox-bell, *leng*, a brass ring attached to an ox's collar or tethering-cord (one can be seen on the animal in the foreground of Plate II), *rot*, bellowing of oxen, *cwai*, fatness, *boi*, shining whiteness, &c. Thus a man whose favourite ox has *rial* distribution of colours may be called Luthrial, Gierrial, Luerial, Dhuorrial, Boirial, and so on. When ox-names are used between age-mates at dances they are generally preceded by dance-names which are selected to harmonize with the ox-names, euphony being considered of great importance in all these word formations. Ox-names are voluminous and abstruse, and in describing them, as in describing cattle-colours, I have not only made a meagre selection from the wealth at my disposal, but have also chosen for illustration the simplest examples and neglected the more obscure.

533 Names of cattle, especially of oxen, and ox-names of men are used profusely in songs. The Nuer, like most pastoral peoples, are poetic and most men and women compose songs which are sung at dances and concerts or are composed for the creator's own pleasure and chanted by him in lonely pastures and amid the cattle in camp kraals. Youths break into song, praising their kinsmen, sweethearts, and cattle, when they feel happy, wherever they may be. I give a free translation of the first verses of two songs, the first sung by girls as they sit together in the evening after the day's work is done, and the second sung by its creator when he is happy.

539
1. The wind blows *wirawira*;[1]
Where does it blow to?

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[1] Literally 'My wind'. The singer runs against it and seems by so doing to add to its strength. This is the north wind which blows at the time of rich

It blows to the river.
The shorthorn carries its full udder to the pastures;[1]
Let her be milked by Nyagaak;
My belly will be filled with milk.
Thou pride of Nyawal,
Ever-quarrelling Rolnyang.[2]
This country is overrun by strangers;
They throw our ornaments into the river;
They draw their water from the bank.[3]
Blackhair my sister,
I am bewildered.
Blackhair my sister,
I am bewildered.
We are perplexed;
We gaze at the stars of God.[4]

2. White ox good is my mother
And we the people of my sister,
The people of Nyariau Bul.
As my black-rumped white ox,
When I went to court the winsome lassie,
I am not a man whom girls refuse.
We court girls by stealth in the night,
I and Kwejok
Nyadeang.[5]
We brought the ox across the river,
I and Kirjoak
And the son of my mother's sister
Buth Gutjaak.
Friend, great ox of the spreading horns,
Which ever bellows amid the herd,
Ox of the son of Bul
Maloa.[6]

It is not necessary to add more examples of cattle-terms and

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pasture when the cows give plenty of milk: hence the connexion between the first three lines and those which follow them.

[1] The cow has refused to suckle its calf or to be milked before going to graze.

[2] Nyagaak is the sister of the poet. Pride (*gweth*) is the dance-name of a girl, Nyawal. Rolnyang is a youth's ox-name.

[3] The strangers are Government forces. The reference to drawing water from the bank is obscure.

[4] Blackhair is a girl's name. The Nuer are perplexed by foreign invasion and the last line is a prayer to God to help them in their adversity.

[5] The ox referred to in the first and fourth lines is the poet's ox. Kwejok is a friend, whose mother is Nyadeang.

[6] Buth is the birth-name of a friend whose ox-name is Gutjaak. The poet, who is a son of Bul Maloa, addresses his ox as his friend in the final lines.

192 183 It is not necessary to add more examples of cattle-terms and their uses to demonstrate that we are dealing with a galaxy of words in the arrangement of which a thesaurus of some magnitude might be compiled. I need only emphasize that this intricate and voluminous vocabulary is not technical and departmental but is employed by every one and in manifold situations of ordinary social life. I have only treated a fragment of a fragment of the linguistic field relating to cattle. I could enter into further detail, but, at best, I have only surveyed, and in an amateur way, that field, which invites broader and more specialist research. My purpose has been to draw attention to it and to show how a study of the dominant interest of Nuer might be approached from this angle. The subject is necessarily vast, because, as we have seen, it is not possible to discuss with Nuer their daily affairs, social connexions, ritual acts, or, indeed, any subject, without reference to cattle which are the core round which daily life is organized and the medium through which social and mystical relations are expressed. Nor is Nuer interest in cattle confined to their practical uses and social functions, but is displayed in their plastic and poetic arts, in which they are the chief theme. The over-emphasis on cattle is thus strikingly shown in language, which, moreover, by compelling reference to cattle, whatever be the subject of speech, continually focuses attention on them and makes them the superlative value of Nuer life.

IX

231 183 Another way in which Nuer engrossment in cattle can be illustrated—our last exemplification thereof—is by noting how readily and frequently they fight about them, for people risk their lives for what they greatly value and in terms of those values.

183 231 721 578 At the present time cattle are the main cause of hostility towards, and suspicion of, the Government, not so much on account of present taxation as of earlier tax-gathering patrols which were little more than cattle raids and of the avowedly plundering expeditions of the Egyptian Government era that preceded them. Nuer war with the Dinka has been almost entirely offensive and directed towards appropriation of herds and annexation of grazing grounds. Cattle have also been the

chief occasion of strife among Nuer themselves. Indeed, after 183
a successful raid on Dinka stock there is often further fighting 231
over the booty. Moreover, Nuer tribes raid one another for 721
cattle. Thus the Leek raid the Jikany, Rengyan, and other 578
western tribes, and cattle raids are of common occurrence along tribal boundaries elsewhere, for to 'steal' (*kwal*) cattle from another tribe is regarded as laudable. Within a tribe, also, fighting frequently results from disputes about cattle between its sections and between individuals of the same section, even of the same village or homestead. Nuer fight on slight provocation and most willingly and frequently when a cow is at stake. On such an issue close kinsmen fight and homes are broken up. When ownership of cattle is in dispute Nuer throw over caution and propriety, showing themselves careless of odds, contemptuous of danger, and full of guile. As my Nuer servant once said to me: 'You can trust a Nuer with any amount of money, pounds and pounds and pounds, and go away for years and return and he will not have stolen it; but a single cow—that is a different matter.'

Nuer say that it is cattle that destroy people, for 'more 183
people have died for the sake of a cow than for any other cause'. 231
They have a story which tells how, when the beasts broke up
their community and each went its own way and lived its own 578
life, Man slew the mother of Cow and Buffalo. Buffalo said she 538
would avenge her mother by attacking men in the bush, but Cow said that she would remain in the habitations of men and avenge her mother by causing endless disputes about debts, bride-wealth, and adultery, which would lead to fighting and deaths among the people. So this feud between Cow and Man has gone on from time immemorial, and day by day Cow avenges the death of her mother by occasioning the death of men. Hence Nuer say of their cattle, 'They will be finished together with mankind', for men will all die on account of cattle and they and cattle will cease together.

It must not, however, be supposed that Nuer live in continuous turmoil: 183
the very fact that they are prepared to resist 231
any infringement of their rights in cattle induces prudence in the 626
relations between persons who regard themselves as members of the same group. It may be said, furthermore, that the great

183 vulnerability of cattle coupled with the extensive living-space
231 required for them are compatible only with a far recognition of
626 conventions in the settlement of disputes, or, in other words, the existence of a tribal organization embracing a large territory, and of some feeling of community over yet larger areas.

Fighting about ownership of cattle and seizing cattle for what are claimed as debts and compensation for losses are of a somewhat different order to raiding for cattle over which no rights, other than the power of the strong, are asserted. War
721 against foreign peoples, as distinct from warfare within a tribe, is almost entirely for plunder. Nuer war against the Dinka, therefore, differs from most primitive warfare in that its primary object is acquisition of wealth, for cattle are a form of wealth that not only lasts a long time and reproduces itself, but is, also, easily seized and transported. Furthermore, it enables invaders to live on the country without commissariat. Crops and dwellings can be destroyed, but cattle can be confiscated and taken home. This quality, which has given pastoral peoples a bias in favour of the arts of war rather than the arts of peace, has meant that the Nuer are not entirely dependent on their own cattle, but can augment their herds and restore the ravages of rinderpest, and have, in fact, for a long time increased their stock, and hence supplemented their food-supply, by raiding; a condition that has shaped their character, economy, and political structure. Skill and courage in fighting are reckoned the highest virtues, raiding the most noble, as well as the most profitable, occupation, and some measure of political agreement and unity a necessity.

We hasten to add that an explanation of warfare between Nuer and Dinka by reference to cattle and pastures alone is too simple a reduction. Hostility is expressed in terms of cattle, and desire for cattle accounts for some peculiarities of the struggle and some characteristics of the political organizations involved in it, but the struggle itself can only be fully understood as a structural process and we present it as such later.

000 We now pass to a brief examination of the oecological system of which Nuer and their cattle form part to discover the conditions in which cattle-husbandry is practised and how far its practice in a certain environment influences political structure.

CHAPTER II

OECOLOGY

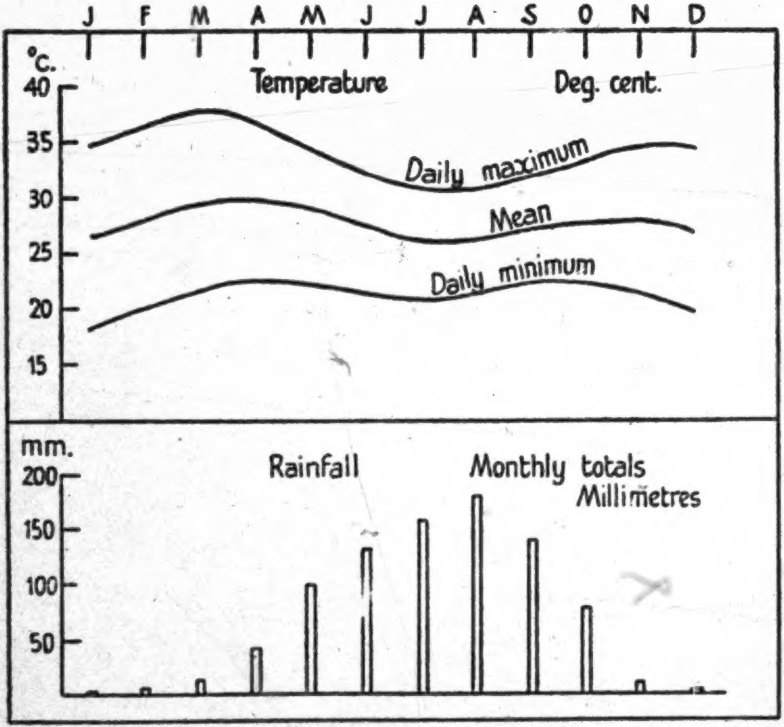
I

FROM a European's point of view Nuerland has no favourable 133
qualities, unless its severity be counted as such, for its endless
marshes and wide savannah plains have an austere, monotonous 823
charm. It is throughout hard on man and beast, being for most of the year either parched or a swamp. But Nuer think that they live in the finest country on earth and, it must be admitted, for herdsmen their country has many admirable features. I soon gave up trying to convince Nuer that there is any country more suited for cattle husbandry than their own, an attempt rendered more useless since a few of them have been taken to Khartoum, which they consider to be the home of all white men, and, having seen the desert scrub of that latitude, have been confirmed in their opinion that their land is superior to ours.

The grasses necessary for the welfare of the herds depend for 134
existence on suitable conditions of soil and water. The soils of Nuerland are heavy clays, broken by the sun into deep cracks in the drought and sodden in the rains. They hold up water and consequently enable certain species of grasses to survive the dry months and provide pasture for the cattle. Nuer and their cattle would not, however, be able to live if it were not that there are more sandy elevated spots on which they can take refuge in flood-time and where they can practise horticulture.

Surface water comes partly from rainfall and partly from the 132
flooding of the rivers which traverse Nuerland and is more than adequate to make grass. In an average year the rains commence in April, when a few showers fall and the sky is overclouded, but it is not till the end of May that they set in with a will. At their maximum, in July and August, the weather is cool, even cold in the mornings and evenings, the sun is overcast during most of the day, and a south-westerly wind prevails. Showers become lighter and less frequent in October and usually have ceased altogether by the middle of November when the north wind begins to blow. It blows consistently down the valley of the Nile

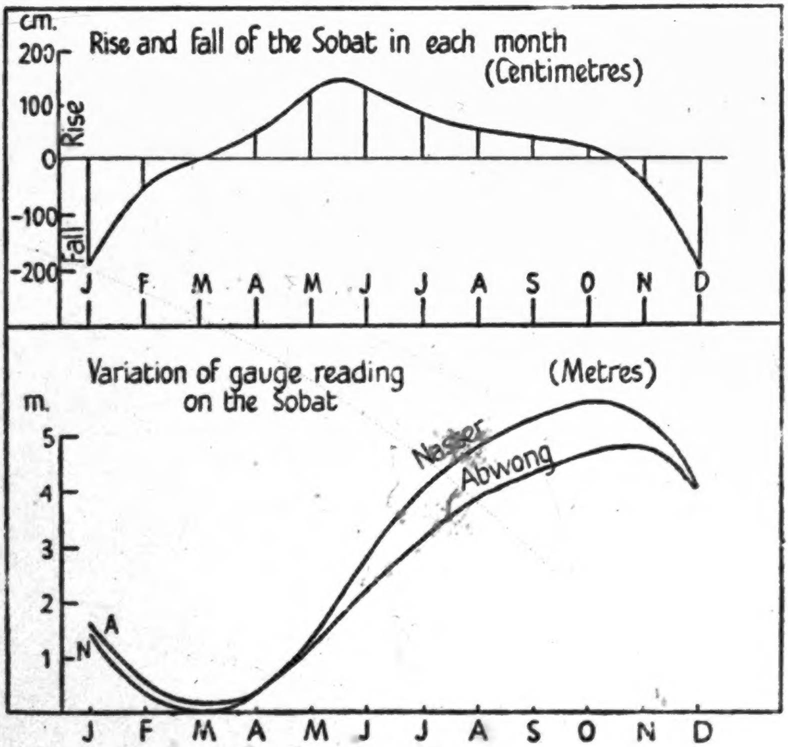
132 till March. In March and April the heat is intense. The rainfall, which is fairly even over all parts of Nuerland, is not so heavy as farther east, on the Ethiopian Plateau, or south, in the basin of the Victoria Nile and along the Nile-Congo divide, though the effects are more felt, because clay beds hold up the water, the flatness of the country prevents surface drainage, and the annual flooding of the rivers occurs simultaneously.



Temperature and Rainfall estimates for Nuerland.
(*Physical Department of the Egyptian Government.*)

133 The main rivers which so greatly influence Nuer life are shown on the map on p. 8. They are the Nile itself, known in these regions as the Bahr el Jebel, which derives its water from the Plateau of the Great Lakes; its western tributaries the Bahr el Ghazal and the Bahr el Arab, which are fed by streams flowing from the Nile-Congo divide; the Baro, the lower reaches of which are known as the Sobat, coming from the Ethiopian

Highlands; and the Pibor which flows from the same direction 133 and also drains to a lesser extent the northern slopes of the Plateau of the Great Lakes and the Sudan Plains. The Bahr el Zeraf is another channel of the Bahr el Jebel.[1] All these rivers flood at the time of the rains and, owing to its flatness, the country is turned into a vast morass.



Rise and fall of the Sobat river.

(Physical Department of the Egyptian Government.)

The whole of Nuerland is an almost dead level plain, covered 133 137 during the rains with high grasses reaching to the waists, and near streams, where they are higher and coarser, to the shoulders of the tall Nuer. It approximately coincides with the extension of true savannah in the Sudan. Here and there are patches of thornwood forest, but often no tree is visible in any direction

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[1] For an excellent description of these rivers see H. E. Hurst and P. Phillips, *The Nile Basin*, vol. i, 1931.

133 and a desolate waste stretches everywhere to the horizon
137 (Plates VI and XI (*a*) and (*b*)). A belt of forest sometimes lines
a river where its banks are high, but never extends far inland. North of the Sobat, on its lower reaches, true savannah gives way to thorny savannah and beyond the southern extremities of Eastern Nuerland one enters park-like savannah forest which becomes thicker the farther south one proceeds, though it usually turns to marshland as the Bahr el Jebel is approached. The southern borders of Western Nuerland fringe ironstone country, likewise covered with savannah forest. As a rule when the rivers are in flood they have no banks and the country lying on either side of them is swamp threaded with wide lagoons, often running parallel to the main channel. This is especially the case with the Bahr el Jebel and the greater part of the Bahr el Ghazal and the Bahr el Arab, the Jebel and the Ghazal being practically united by surface water in the rainy season. The Bahr el Zeraf is bounded by swamp to a lesser degree and the lower reaches of the Sobat not at all.

133 This vast plain is threaded with depressions, like that shown
on Plate XIX (*b*), which run in all directions, often crossing one
132 another, and linking up with the main rivers. Where continuous, these depressions have the appearance of small rivers, though water seldom flows in them. While rain is falling on the country the main rivers flood into these depressions, making a network of waterways which prevents drainage from the saturated earth, so that the rainwater lies everywhere in deep puddles which slowly extend till by the middle of June the whole country, except for occasional higher land, is inundated. The water remains several inches deep till September, and Nuerland has the appearance of a great grass-covered swamp; there are streams, lagoons, and pools wherever there are slight depressions, and islands, on which are perched villages, wherever there are ridges and knolls. The rivers begin to fall about the same time as the rains decline, the fall being most rapid on the Sobat (diagram on p. 53). The blazing sun then quickly evaporates the surface water, while the streams, instead of being channels of overflow from the rivers, now feed them, and by the middle of November the grasses are dry enough to be fired. By the end of December a great part of the country has been burnt

132 and is cracked into deep fissures. The wet and dry seasons 133 are therefore very pronounced and the transition from one to the other sudden.

312 Scarcity of rain is probably more serious than low river water, but both may inconvenience Nuer to the point of famine, because sufficient water may not be held up in the clay beds to enable the grasses to recover from firing; inland watercourses may quickly dry up and compel movement to lakes and rivers earlier than is desirable; and there may be a shortage of the marsh pasturage which is usually the mainstay of the cattle at the end of the dry season. Insufficient rain may also destroy the millet. Moreover, it is probable that low rainfall over the whole of North-East Africa causes insufficiency of rain and low rivers to occur in Nuerland simultaneously. Western Nuerland is less subject to drought than Eastern Nuerland, and to the west of the Nile there is always water within easy reach of villages. This seems largely due to the fact that the Bahr el Jebel and the Bahr el Ghazal do not sink in their beds to any extent, since they are fed by perennial streams and have enormous marsh and lake reservoirs. High rainfall and high river water probably also go together and in such years of flood it is difficult for the cattle to find enough grazing to maintain life.

131 The main characteristics of Nuerland are: (1) It is dead flat. (2) It has clay soils. (3) It is very thinly and sporadically wooded. (4) It is covered with high grasses in the rains. (5) It is subject to heavy rainfall. (6) It is traversed by large rivers which flood annually. (7) When the rains cease and the rivers fall it is subject to severe drought.

These characteristics interact with one another and compose an environmental system which directly conditions Nuer life and influences their social structure. The determination is of so varied and complex a nature that we do not attempt to summarize its full significance at this stage of our description, but shall ask ourselves a simpler question: to what extent are the Nuer controlled by their environment as herdsmen, fishermen, and gardeners? We have demonstrated that their chief interest is in their herds and shall first discuss how this interest, combined with physical conditions, necessitates a certain mode of life.

[p.56 contains no Textual material]

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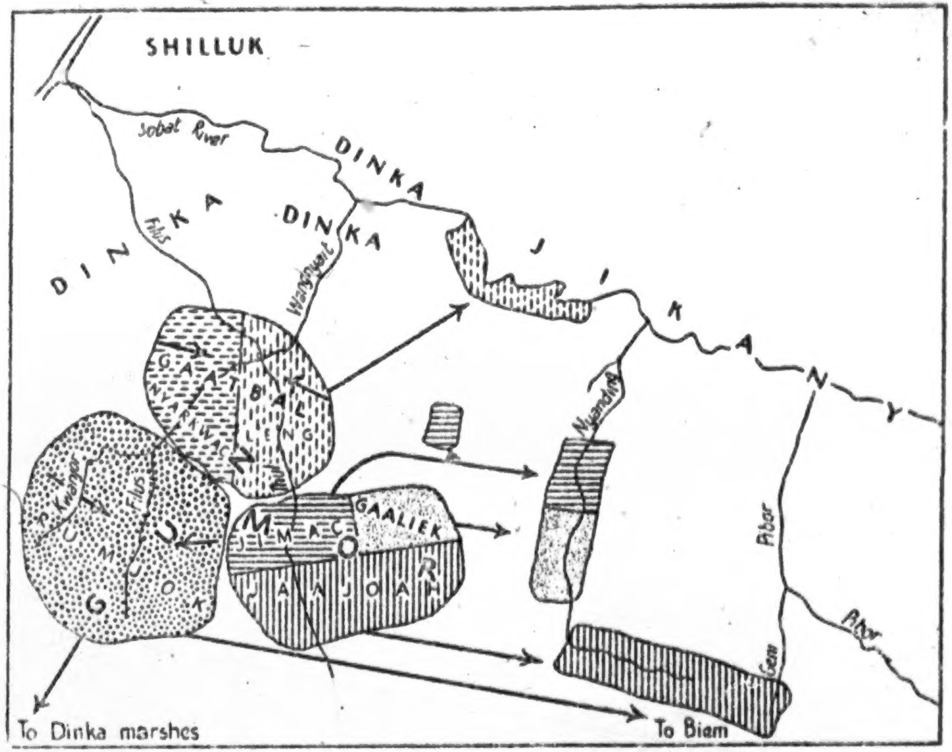
SHILLUK
Sobat River
DINKA
DINKA
DINKA
JIKANY
Filus
Wangkwei
GAATBAL
NYARKWAC
LENG
G
U
N
RUMJOK
Kwenger
Filus
M
O
R
JIMAC
GAALIEK
JAAJOAH
Nyanding
Pibor
Pibor
Geni
To Dinka marshes
To Biam

Sketch-map to show distribution of Lou tribal sections (arrows point from area of villages to dry season camps).

183 233 221 Here we make only two observations of a more general order. (1) Although the Nuer have a mixed pastoral-horticultural economy their country is more suitable for cattle husbandry than for horticulture, so that the environmental bias coincides with the bias of their interest and does not encourage a change in the balance in favour of horticulture. If it were not for rinderpest—a recent introduction—it might be possible to live a purely pastoral life, but, as we shall see later, a purely horticultural life would be precarious. (2) Nuer cannot, except in a few favoured spots, live in one place throughout the year. The floods drive them and their herds to seek the protection of higher ground. Absence of water and pasture on this higher ground compels them to move during the drought. Hence their life is of necessity migratory, or, more strictly, transhumant. A further reason that urges them to change their abode according to the seasons is their inability at the present time to subsist solely on the products of their cattle. A milk and meat diet has to be supplemented by grain and fish; and whereas the most suitable place for cultivation of millet is inland, on the edge of slightly elevated ground, fish are found in rivers which are generally distant from these elevated stretches.

II

233 312 221 Excess or insufficiency of water is the first problem that faces Nuer. It is essential that cattle should be protected from the water that covers the country in the rains, for they quickly get diseases of the hoof if they have to stand in water for long periods. Village sites are selected on the only spots affording such protection to man and beast: patches of slightly higher ground. When the rains have ceased water supplies near villages are soon exhausted, because, naturally, the highest and driest sites have been selected for building, and it becomes necessary to move to pools, lakes, lagoons, marshes, and rivers. Owing to the vast rivers that traverse Nuerland and the thorough irrigation they give to the country through a network of channels there is seldom difficulty about finding surface water, though people may have to go far to obtain it. Only in parts of Lou, Gaawar, and Eastern Jikany, as far as is known, are they regularly forced to dig wells in the beds of streams at the height of the

[p. 58 contains no textual material]

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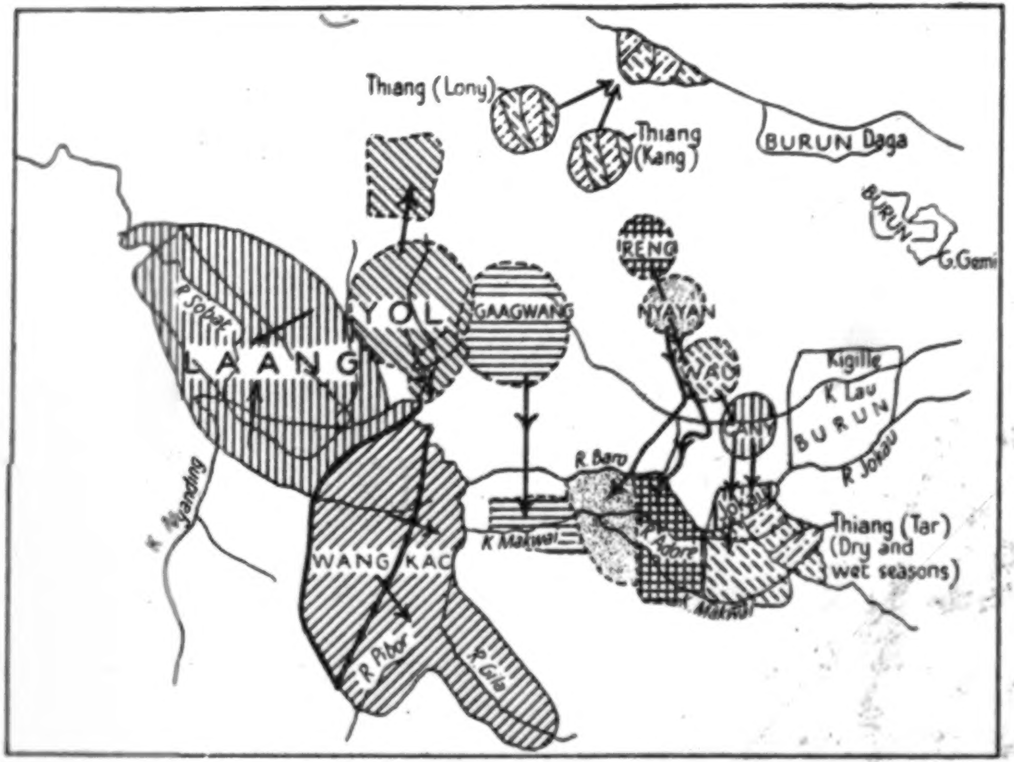
[p. 58]


Thiang (Lony)
Thiang (Kang)
BURUN Daga
BURUN
G. Gemi
RENG
NYAYAN
YOL
GAAGWANG
LAANG
R. Sobat
WAC
CANY
Kigille
K. Lau
BURUN
R. Jokau
R. Baro
JOKAU
Thiang (Tar) (Dry and wet seasons)
K. Makwai
R. Adura
K. Nyanding
WANG KAC
R. Pibor
R. Gila

Sketch-map to show distribution of the Eastern Jikany tribal sections (arrows point from area of villages to dry season camps) (after Mr. C. L. Armstrong).

drought. Twenty years ago this was probably more customary 233
among the Lou than to-day, for they had not then the undis- 221
puted access to open water that most sections now enjoy. The 312
wells, which have to be redug each year, are two to three feet in diameter and twenty to thirty feet in depth, and their excavation takes two or three days of hard labour. The water, about a foot deep, is clean and fresh and the wells are frequently cleaned out, steps being cut in the walls for this purpose (Plate XV (*b*)). Each household has its own well which is surrounded by shallow mud troughs where the cattle are watered three times daily. Considerable labour is required to draw water for them and much attention is devoted to prevent it from being fouled by sheep and goats, which have their special troughs. Fights sometimes break out over these troughs.

The problem of water is closely related to that of vegetation. In their seasonal movements Nuer seek pasturage as well as drinking-water and they take the cattle to where they know that both can be obtained. When herdsmen drive the cattle from camp to grazing grounds they do not guide them haphazardly across the plain, but with purpose towards stretches of succulent grasses. It is probable, too, that not only are daily and seasonal movements influenced by distribution of grasses, but [721] also that the direction of Nuer expansion has been controlled by their habitat. Nuer claim that they have not overrun the country of the Ngok Dinka because it is poor pasture land and that they are little interested in the Shilluk kingdom for the same reason.

The early rains are the season of fatness, for then the grasses germinate, or renew their growth after the long drought, and the cattle can graze on the young shoots to their content. As the rains advance, grazing becomes more difficult, the ground being flooded and the vegetation rank, and in years of high water may be a serious problem. The cattle have to rely on the short grasses that prevail on village ridges: a further reason that compels Nuer to occupy these sites in the rains. When rain ceases, the overcropped grasses on these ridges soon wither, while the rank grasses of the plains impede the movements of the herds and no longer provide good grazing. Therefore Nuer hasten to burn them as soon as they are dry, since some species

[p. 60 contains no textual material]

send up new shoots a few days after being fired—probably those 233
that have roots long enough to tap water held up in the clay 221
beds and a clump formation that protects the core of the plants 312
from the flames. If it were not for this habit cattle could not survive, at any rate inland, during a dry year. When the grasses have been fired cattle can wander as they please, being no longer frustrated by surface water and rank growth, and satisfy their appetites on the new shoots. As water becomes scarcer and grazing poorer Nuer fall back on permanent water where they make large camps and the cattle can graze on marsh plants that abound in numberless depressions and make good milk. In May, when the new rains set in, they are able to return to their villages. The few cattle Nuer possess, the vast spaces they can exploit, and their nomadic existence ensure that there is nowhere serious overgrazing.

Variation of water-supplies and vegetation thus forces Nuer 233
to move and determines the direction of their movements. In 221
a later section we shall see that fishing is another important 361
consideration in these movements. In late November or early December the youths and some of the girls take the cattle from the villages to camps, generally some miles away, leaving the older people to harvest the second millet crop and repair huts and byres. Usually a few lactating cows are left behind to provide milk for the small children. These early camps (*wec jiom*) are made near pools in a place where the grasses have previously been fired. In Lou country they are often made in thornwood forest, where *Balanites aegyptiaca* is abundant, but in many parts of Nuerland, especially to the west of the Nile, they are formed on stream banks for fishing. When the second harvest has been reaped the cattle are brought back to the villages to eat the millet stalks, if they are near enough. As pools dry up, pasturage is exhausted, or fishing becomes poor, the youths make new camps, where they are joined by the married people, and they may move camp several times before settling in their final camping grounds (*wec mai*) at the side of lakes or rivers in January and February. The early camps are small, being manned by a few kinsmen, but they tend to get larger as the season advances and water becomes scarcer, and the final camps may contain several hundred persons.

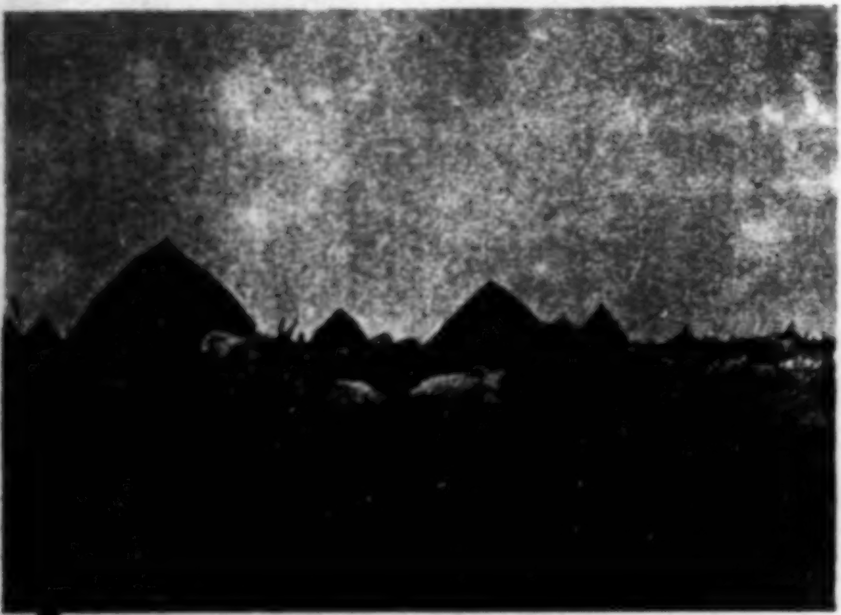
233 221 312 The dry season movements of the Lou, the Eastern Jikany, and the Zeraf River tribes are shown on the sketch-maps accompanying this section. Of the Sobat tribes, the Lou stay inland as long as they can and in a wet year may remain inland throughout the dry season, falling back on the deeper pools, some large enough to be called lakes, e.g. Muot tot, Muot dit, Fading, Fadoi, Gwong-gwong, Yollei, Tepjor, and Nyerol. If forced to leave them the Gun primary section moves north to the Sobat and south-west to the flooded plains of the Bahr el Zeraf in the country of the Twic Dinka, and the Mor primary section moves north-east to the Nyanding river and east to the Geni and Pibor. In the old days [721] *fighting frequently occurred if the Lou moved to these camping* sites, because the banks of the Sobat were in the hands of the Balak Dinka while their occupation of the Geni and Pibor was disputed by the Anuak and Beir and their move to the south-west was trespass on Dinka grazing grounds. Even the lower reaches of the Nyanding do not belong to the Lou, but to the Gaajok. Therefore they probably only moved to these sites when absolutely necessary.

The Eastern Jikany have not so much need to move as have the Lou. Nevertheless they all fall back on rivers or marshes before the drought is far advanced. The three primary sections of the Gaajok move as follows: the Laang concentrate on the Sobat, the Wangkac move south-east to the banks of the Pibor and Gila, and the Yol either camp near the junction of the Wokau and Sobat or northwards along the edges of the Machar swamp. The Gaagwang move to the western end of Khor Makwai. The Gaajak primary sections move as follows: the northern Thiang sections (Kang and Lony) go to the Daga river while the southern Thiang section (Tar) and the Reng, Nyayan, Wau, and Cany sections camp on the banks of the Baro, Jokau, Adura, and Makwei, mainly in Ethiopia.

The three Zeraf river tribes fall back on the Bahr el Jebel and the Bahr el Zeraf and streams flowing into these two rivers, as shown in Mr. Lewis's sketch. The Gaawar who live on the left bank of the Zeraf can build their villages on high ground near that river and do not have to move far in the drought.

The Western Nuer mainly camp on inland streams which are no great distance from their villages. The Karlual primary section of the Leek tribe mostly concentrate first on the Loogh stream and afterwards on the Cal and Wangtac, all of which link up with the Bahr el Ghazal. The Dok camp near pools in the beds of inland streams. The Western Jikany move to the Jikany marshes at the edge of the Bahr el Ghazal. Without giving

[See pp 50, 58, 60 — analyst]



a. Homesteads on mound (Lou)

b. Homesteads on mound (Lou) [Face p. 62]

233
221
312
further details, which, indeed, I could not furnish, about the disposition of the Western Nuer in the dry season, it may be said that they travel very much less than most of the Eastern Nuer tribes, especially the Lou.

233
221
361
Different villages and sections tend to move about the same time and to visit the same pools each year, though time and place and, to some extent, degree of concentration vary according to climatic conditions. Usually, however, the main dry season camps are formed yearly at the same spots. When the rains commence in May the older people return to the villages to prepare the ground for sowing and they are joined there in June by the youths and girls, who bring the cattle with them. When the younger people return the whole camp is broken up on the same day, and the cattle are driven to their village with as few halts as possible. The move from villages to camps, on the contrary, is less concerted and abrupt. The younger members of two or three families form a small camp, after the firing of the grasses in November, when and where they please. Several days later they may be joined by other people from the same village, or these may form a separate camp. There is still water and some grazing on the village sites and there is still work to be accomplished in gardens and homesteads. Thus, while camps change into villages overnight, villages change into camps more slowly. By the height of the drought every one is in camp and the villages are silent and deserted.

The year thus consists of a period in villages and a period in camps, and the camp period is divided into the early part of the dry season when the younger people move from small camp to small camp and the latter part of the dry season when every one is concentrated in large camps round permanent water which they do not leave till they return to their villages.

III

361
Nuer are forced into villages for protection against floods and mosquitoes and to engage in horticulture, and are forced out of villages into camps by drought and barrenness of vegetation and to engage in fishing. I describe these villages and camps very shortly.

Some tribes are better off for sites than others. The Lou

361 and the Eastern Jikany are especially fortunate in this respect, but in Western Nuerland, though there are many suitable ridges, the country is more inundated and there are few elevated stretches of any size, except, as far as my observations go, among sections of the Leek and Dok tribes, which are better off than those tribes which lie in between.

What is needed for a village site is not only room for building but also for grazing and cultivations. Many villages are perched on mounds (Plates VII and XVI), the surfaces of which are accumulations of debris, at the edge of those rivers that have banks in flood, and the cattle graze on the slopes or in near-by thornwood forest, where also gardens are cultivated. More usually homesteads are strung out along sandy ridges (Plate VIII), a mile or two in length and a few hundred yards in breadth, sites which allow greater spacial division between them, and the gardens run at their backs and the grazing-grounds to their fronts. In some parts of Nuerland, especially in the favoured tribes I have mentioned, stretches of higher ground, sometimes several miles in extent, enable the people to build anywhere, except near the narrow depressions that thread them, and little groups of homesteads are dotted here and there, surrounded, and separated, by their gardens and grazing grounds. Nuer prefer to dwell in this greater privacy and show no inclination for true village life.

By making their villages on elevated ground Nuer keep themselves
and their cattle above the flood that lies everywhere on
the vast plain beneath and gain some protection from the
swarms of mosquitoes which breed in the standing water. In
[312] Western Nuerland I have seen low mud dykes at the foot of
occupied ridges to keep back the water in years of heavy
361 flood. As they build always on the highest spots the torrential
132 rains that fall daily after June run off the slope so that the hard
floors of kraals soon dry. How terrific are these rains may be
judged from Plate XIV, taken from under the awning of my
tent during a moderate shower in August, and how considerably
they flood all but village sites may be seen in Plate XII, which
shows a millet garden, on a higher level than the plain, in
October. On a tour of Western Nuerland in October of 1936,
a fairly dry year, we walked almost continuously in several

inches of water for seventeen days, apart from having to cross 361
numerous deep depressions. In some parts of Lou and Eastern 132
Jikany, particularly in Gaajak, people build in open thornwood
forest, but generally Nuer prefer to make their villages in open
country, even where there is forest near-by, because their cattle
are better protected from wild beasts, insect pests, and damp,
and also, apparently, because millet does not do so well in
wooded country. Building in the open seems also to give freedom
from termites.

A Nuer homestead consists of a cattle byre and huts. Their 343
byres are of size and workmanship that have evoked the admiration 342
of all travellers. Their form, and the appearance of huts,
may be seen in several plates, and their mode of construction is
excellently portrayed in Mr. Corfield's photograph (Plate XVIII).
It is only necessary to explain that the roofs are supported
by trunks of trees erected inside the barns. Both byres and huts
are of wattle and daub, though in Western Nuerland, where
there is less forest, bundles of millet stalks are employed as
rafters. Building and repairs generally take place early in the
dry season when there is plenty of straw for thatching and
enough millet to provide beer for those who assist in the work.
During the rains fences are erected from the byres along two 351
sides of the kraal and around huts to control the movements of
cattle and to prevent them messing the homesteads and damaging
the crops (Plate XVII). Grazing and the use of grass, 423
trees, &c., is the common right of all members of a village
community.

Families often change their place of residence from one part 361
of a village to another and from village to village, and, in the
case of small villages, if there have been many deaths, the cattle
are poorly, there have been fights within the village, or pastures
and cultivations are exhausted, the whole village community
may move to a new site. After about ten years both pastures
and gardens show evident signs of exhaustion on the smaller
ridges, and huts and byres need rebuilding after some five years.

In dry-season camps men sleep in windscreens and women 342
in beehive-huts, or both sexes in beehive-huts. These flimsy 513
shelters are erected a few yards from water, generally in a semicircle
or in lines with their backs to the prevailing wind, and

342 are simply constructed, the roots of grasses, or occasionally
573 stems of millet, being tightly packed in a narrow trench to make windscreens, and the tops of the grasses being bound together and plastered with dung on the outside to make huts (Plates XV (*a*), XIX (*a*), and XXI (*b*)). The whole space within a windscreen is occupied by a hearth of ashes on which the men sleep around a fire, and the openings face the kraal. If people do not intend to spend more than a few days at a site they often sleep in the open and do not trouble to erect windscreens and huts. These light dwellings can be erected in a few hours.

IV

221 Another circumstance that determines Nuer movements is
136 the abundance of insect life, which is an ever-present menace,
231 for the cattle get little rest from stinging flies and ticks from morn till nightfall and would be worried to death if their masters did not give them some protection.

136 Mosquitoes swarm in the rains, their ravages being terrible
231 from July to September, when, as soon as the sun sets, men and
372 beasts have to take refuge in huts and byres. The doors of the huts are tightly closed, the air-holes blocked, and fires lit. In the centre of the byres, which house the cattle, burn large dung fires which fill them with smoke so dense that one cannot even see the cattle. Young men sleep on platforms above the fires, and if the smoke clears—the doors are shut, but it escapes through the thatched roof—they descend to pile on more fuel. By this means the beasts are enabled to obtain some rest at night. At the end of the rains while the cattle are still in the villages they are left in the kraals till their masters go to bed, when they are shut in the byres to protect them from lions. Fires are not made up so high at this season, for mosquitoes are less troublesome, since there is no surface water, the millet has been cut, and the grasses are close-cropped. Later those men who remain in the villages, while the others go into camps, often erect windscreens in the kraals and spend the night outside with any cows which have been left behind. In the dry season mosquitoes are absent except near pools and marshes, and even in the vicinity of water they are not troublesome from January to May, so that the herds can sleep in the open. Nevertheless,

they are surrounded by windscreens in which their masters sleep at the side of dung fires from which smoke rises on every side to envelop the camp. 136 231 372

Another unpleasant pest is the seroot fly. It appears to be seasonal, flourishing on cloudy days from May to July, though it sometimes appears at other times of the year. The seroot attack the cattle in the mornings and accompany them to pastures, where they bite them so effectively that they are often driven, stained with blood, back to camp, where dung fires are lit to give them protection. On such days the cattle are unable to graze, fitfully, for more than two or three hours. Another biting fly, the *stomoxys*, is prevalent throughout the year, being especially conspicuous in the dry season and early rains. It is probably this fly which is responsible for the presence of trypanosomiasis in parts of Nuerland, especially among the Eastern Jikany, by transmitting the trypanosomes directly on its proboscis from beast to beast, for the tsetse does not occur in Nuerland, except, perhaps, on its eastern extremities, though its lethal character is well known to Nuer. There are other insects which annoy the cattle, but it is not known whether any of them carry disease in this latitude. Of these may be mentioned the eight-legged cattle tick, which Nuer remove from the bodies of their animals when they return to camp in the evenings—though not frequently or systematically enough; an insect called *tharkwac* which is said to live on the bodies of cattle, though its bites do not cause bleeding; a fly called *mick*; and the common black fly, like our house fly in appearance, which worries the herds a good deal in hot weather—damp and cold seem to kill it off. Red soldier ants occasionally infest the byres so that the cattle have to be removed while the floors are sprinkled with ashes, but they are rare in Nuerland. Nuer are helpless against most of these insects, though, no doubt, smoke keeps them away to some extent. 136 231

Speaking from personal experience I may say that one is continuously tormented by insects in Nuerland, especially by the common black fly and the mosquito. It is evident that the cattle suffer considerably from their attentions and there can be little doubt that this constant irritation lowers their vitality and affects their milk yield, for they seldom have any real rest. In the circumstances their hardiness and endurance are remarkable.

Since several species of tsetse in the Southern Sudan carry trypanosomes pathogenic to cattle it is fortunate for the Nuer that they do not occur in his country. This immunity is

136 231 undoubtedly due to the absence of shady forest which, in its turn, is probably due in the main to flooding and partly to firing. The prevalence of tsetse in the forest belt that stretches along the foot-hills of the Ethiopian escarpment has prevented the Nuer from expanding as far eastwards as they might have done, for it is clear that one of the reasons for their evacuation of Anuak-land was the loss of stock. In relation to tsetse the Nuer, in their present territory, occupy a more favourable position than most Southern Sudan peoples.

A further consideration of great importance is the presence of many microscopic organisms that cause disease in men and cattle. This is not a subject about which we can say much. With regard to stock it may, however, be said that it suffers from many different diseases and that Nuer usually have some treatment for them, though it may be doubted whether it has much, if any, therapeutic value. The two most serious contagious diseases are bovine pleuro-pneumonia, which in some years causes heavy mortality among the herds, and rinderpest. Rinderpest entered the Sudan not more than fifty years ago and Nuer refer to the period before it came, along with Arab invaders, at the time the Boiloc age-set was being initiated, as 'the life of the cattle'. They have no way of combating the scourge once it has attacked a herd, but they are aware that an infected herd ought to be isolated. They are so used to it now that they generally take the precaution of splitting up their herd in the dry season, when it is prevalent, and placing beasts in widely separated camps, so that if it breaks out in any part of the country the cattle placed in another part may escape. An animal which recovers from the disease is known to be immune from further attacks and its value is thereby enhanced, though Nuer are aware that its calves will not enjoy the same immunity. Miss Soule tells me that Nuer claim to be able to tell if an animal has had rinderpest by scraping the tip of the horns and noting the colour beneath the surface. If it is white the animal is immune. Though threatened with starvation in the years of its visitation Nuer face the scourge with resignation and detachment.

136 231 178 Rinderpest has caused and continues to cause terrible havoc in the herds. It cannot exactly be estimated what, and how

PLATE VIII

133

Sandy ridge with cattle byres on the horizon (Dok)

[Face p. 68]

136 extensive, have been the social changes which have resulted
231 from this disturbance of the oecological equilibrium. Since
178 bride-wealth consists of cattle there must have been for a time
considerable dislocation of marriage arrangements, but stability
[583] has been reached to-day by lowering the number of cattle
which have to be paid. A like assessment on a new footing does
[628] not seem to have been achieved in homicide negotiations, in
which there is not the same goodwill between the parties as in
marriage, and blood-wealth appears to have been claimed up
to the present time at the old rate of payment, though Nuer
recognize that bride-wealth and blood-wealth should rise and
fall together. One cannot make any precise statement on the
matter, but it is likely that feuds were less easily concluded
than before and that consequently tribal relations were affected.
It may also be supposed that decrease in stock has led to a
general deterioration of the standard of living, for climatic
conditions do not allow adequate compensation by expending
further labour on horticulture. No doubt Nuer grew more millet
than before, but they must have suffered a decrease in their
total food-supply and, above all, in security. It will be seen in
a later section that Nuer can no more exist on a purely horticultural
economy than they can, at any rate since the introduction
of rinderpest, exist on a purely pastoral economy. They
must have a mixed economy and can compensate on one side
[721] or the other only to a very limited degree. Nuer sought to repair
their losses rather by extensive raiding of their Dinka neighbours,
passing on to them their own losses in stock. We know
that Nuer raided Dinka before rinderpest entered the country,
but it is likely that their foreign relations have been affected by
the greater stimulus to aggression. Other probable effects could
be noted, especially in kinship relations, but one can only guess
their importance, so we confine our speculations to a few of those
that may be supposed to have occurred in Nuer economy and
political life.

V

226 It was noted in Chapter I that to exist Nuer have to make use of a mixed economy, since their herds do not supply them with adequate nourishment. It will be seen in a later section that their millet harvest is often meagre and uncertain. Fish,

226 therefore, are an indispensable article of food, and the pursuit of them influences seasonal movements.

226
262 The rivers teem with fish of many edible species which greatly supplement the diet of the Nuer in the dry season and enable them to survive years in which the crops fail or there are epidemics among the herds. [361] In choosing camp sites opportunities for fishing are considered no less than water and pasturage. Nevertheless, Nuer do not regard themselves as a water-people, and despise people like the Shilluk who, they say, live mainly by fishing and hunting hippopotami. In spite of this suggestion of superiority Nuer enjoy fishing and the feeling of well-being a full fish diet gives them. One may judge how great their catch must be at the height of the dry season from the fact that one can see along the Baro and Sobat cattleless fishing camps (*kal*) in which, except for a little grain, goat's milk, and an occasional wild beast, people live on fish alone for several weeks. These are poor people who either have no cattle or have one or two cows which they have placed in the care of richer relatives, for no Nuer would live without his cattle if he could help it, and they are despised as persons of Anuak or Balak Dinka descent. Some Nuer tribes fish more than others, according to their opportunities. Thus Lou country has poor fishing compared with Eastern Jikany which has a network of waterways. [421] Tribes and tribal sections jealously guard their fishing rights, and people who want to fish extensively in a pool must first obtain permission from its owners if they do not want to provoke fighting.

226
221 It is the seasonal flooding, due to the rise and fall of the rivers and the flatness of the country, that allows Nuer to kill fish in such large numbers, for they are carried out of the rivers, where they are little accessible to the simple methods of Nuer fishing, into streams and lagoons where they are more vulnerable. The best months are November and December, when the rivers begin to fall and to drain streams and lagoons, which can be dammed at suitable points and the fish speared in their efforts to break downstream. Fishing from dams is conducted mainly at night, fires being lighted behind the fishers, who fix their attention on a line of withies placed upstream from the dam and hurl their spears at whatever point of the line fish reveal

their presence by striking the withies. My friend the late Mr. L. F. Hamer, who took the photograph reproduced in Plate XXII(*a*), about sunrise, reckoned that quite a hundred fish are caught from a dam in a single night. The dams are lowered as the water falls. 226 221

227

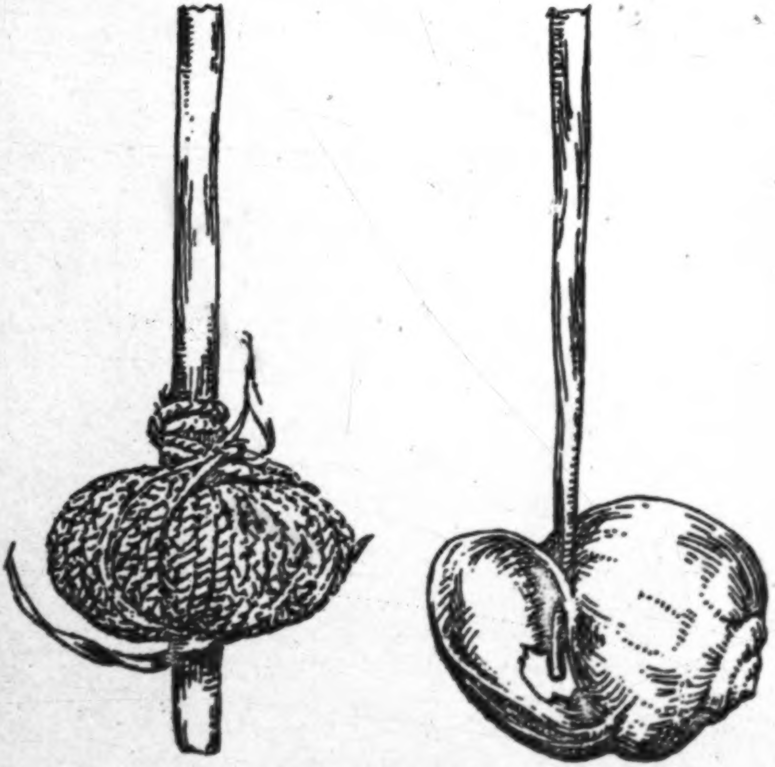


FIG. 10. Instruments for attracting fish.

As the dry season advances a great number of fish are imprisoned in lakes and lagoons from which there is no outlet, and as these dry up they are confined to a smaller and smaller expanse of water and are killed by individual fishers using barbed spears and long harpoons (Plates X and XXII (*b*)), and, at the end of the season, by battues in which gaffs and basket traps may also be employed. Fishing is fairly consistently productive throughout the drought, its yield increasing somewhat in the battue period and rising to a second peak at the 226 221

226 commencement of the rains, in April and May, when the rivers
221 begin to rise again and bring the fish into the shallows where
they are easily speared among the reeds and weeds. There is
very little fishing—by spear in occasional lagoons—after the
Nuer have returned to their villages, for these are mainly inland,
away from open water, and the streams are too deep and
too infested with crocodiles to encourage fishing. Also, the fish
are widely distributed by flood water and protected by rank
marsh vegetation. Those Nuer whose villages are on the banks
[501] of large rivers sometimes fish from dug-out canoes (Plate IX)
[227] with long harpoons, but the Nuer possess very few good canoes
—and these they have exchanged or stolen from the Anuak—
for they have neither the wood nor the skill to make more than
crudely burnt-out vessels of palm and sycamore.

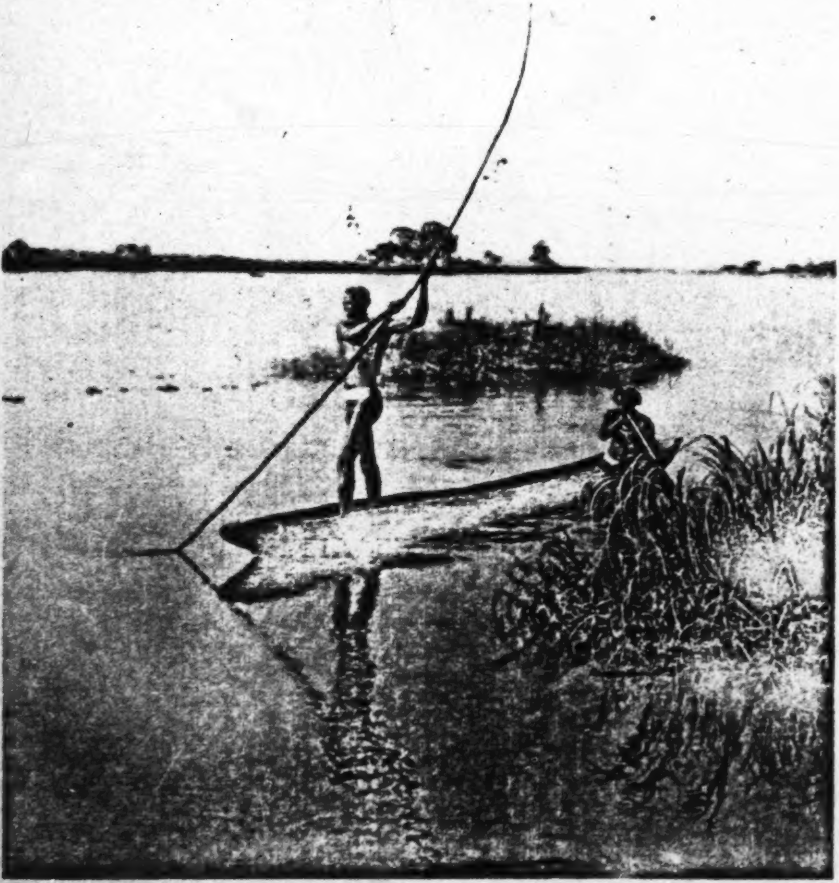
226 Nuer are fine spearsmen but, otherwise, not very ingenious
fishermen. Except for occasional fish spitted with amazing rapidity
from the bows of canoes by harpoons and spears as they jump
or rise to the surface, Nuer never see their prey, but either hurl
their spears at random into likely spots amid weeds and reeds
or set up grasses and withies to indicate the presence of fish.
[773] A myth recounts that once upon a time all fish were visible to
the human eye but that God later made them invisible in the
water. The chief Nuer weapon is the barbed spear, though the
[227] harpoon is considerably used. When fishing in shallows with
spears they sometimes strike the water with a ball of twine or
the shell of a giant snail attached to a stick (Fig. 10) to attract
[252] the fish. Fish are eaten roasted or boiled.

VI

136 Nuerland is also very rich in game, though Nuer do not exploit
this source of food extensively. There are vast herds of tiang
224 and cob; other antelopes are plentiful; and buffalo, elephant,
[262] and hippopotami abound. Nuer eat all animals except carnivora,
monkeys, some of the smaller rodents, and zebra, and they
kill the last for its skin and tail in the south of Lou country,
where it roams in the dry season. Lions abound, especially to
the west of the Nile, and are a serious menace to the herds, but
[292] Nuer only kill them and leopards, the skins of which are worn
by chiefs, if they attack cattle in kraals or grazing grounds, as

PLATE IX

000



Harpoon-fishing from canoe (Sobat river)

[Face p. 72]

frequently happens, especially in the early dry season. They 136
seldom go out to hunt game animals, except gazelle and giraffe, 224
and only pursue those that approach their camps. Indeed, they cannot be considered keen hunters and may even be said to treat the sport with a measure of condescension, holding that only absence of cattle makes a man engage in it other than casually. Their flocks and herds provide them with meat, and this fact probably accounts in part for their lack of interest in hunting, which is, however, also to be related to the nature of their country, for its open plains offer little opportunity for successful hunting with the spear.

Nuer refuse all reptiles, except the crocodile and the turtle. 136
Ostriches, bustards, francolin and guinea-fowl, geese, duck, 262
teal, and other waterfowl, abound, but Nuer consider it shameful for adults to eat them and, except in very severe famines it is probable that only children, poor cattleless men, and an occasional elderly person, eat them, and then rarely and secretly
in the bush. They do not keep domesticated fowls and show [235]
particular repugnance to the idea of eating them. Likewise eggs are not eaten. No insects are eaten, but the honey of wild bees is collected after the firing of the grasses in December and January and is either eaten in the bush or with porridge at home.

The only tribe who possess more than an odd gun or two are 224
the Eastern Gaajak, who obtain them from Ethiopia. Nuer hunt with dogs and the spear, and rely on their fleetness, endurance, and courage. Hunting in the rains is therefore impossible, because not only does rank vegetation impede pursuit but also animals can choose their ground, there being everywhere sufficient water and grazing. At the height of the dry season they are forced to drink at the same pools, lagoons, and river inlets as men, and the dry bare country allows open chase, for except in tracking giraffe, Nuer hunt by sight and not by spoor. It is only gazelles, which are worried by dogs, and buffaloes, which prefer attack to flight, that can be tackled by one or two men. Other animals, such as tiang, cob, and buck, are only killed when they approach a camp and can be cut off by a large number of young men. I saw several animals killed on the Sobat by being surrounded on the landward side and driven into

224 the reeds, where their only escape was by swimming the river. In this district, and perhaps elsewhere, Nuer, spurred by hunger, leave camp after the first heavy showers to look for giraffe tracks and pursue these animals relentlessly till they overtake them. This is only possible at the time of the first rains when the animals still have to approach camps to drink while their large hooves stick in the moist earth and slow down their movements. The Nuer, particularly those of the Zeraf river, have a reputation for their courage and skill in hunting elephants, which are surrounded and speared by large parties.

Nuer hunting has thus the same character of simplicity as their fishing. They use little cunning and, except for the spiked-
[171] wheel trap, no mechanical devices. This trap is used by immigrant Dinka in most parts of Nuerland and by some of the Lou Nuer, who, nevertheless, regard it as a Dinka contrivance and accordingly tend to despise it, regarding its use as unworthy of men possessing cattle but allowable to poor persons who can
[301] thereby obtain meat and even cattle, for giraffe-hair is highly valued for necklaces, such as those which can be seen on Nuer in many plates (especially Plates I and XXVIII(*b*)). Hence one finds a few members of a camp setting traps while the rest abstain. They are set around drinking-pools at the end of the dry season or in the early rains when surface water is still restricted and the ground is not yet moist enough to rot the leather nooses. In 1930 on the Sobat large numbers of giraffe were captured by means of spiked-wheel traps, but it appears to have been an exceptional year. If game-pits are dug at all by Nuer they are very rare and found only on the borders of Dinka tribes, and the burning of stretches of grass that have survived the annual firing in order to spear or club the animals that flee the flames is a very casual practice. In the dry season in Western Nuerland, and probably in other parts, though not on the Sobat, men harpoon hippopotami along the tracks to their nightly grazing grounds. Hippopotamus hunting is not, however, considered a Nuer practice, but a habit of Shilluk and some of the Dinka tribes; and even in those parts where Nuer hunt them it is said to be only men with a few cattle who do so. We may conclude that hunting does not give Nuer much meat and that they do not greatly esteem it as a sport.

VII

In most years wild fruits, seeds, and roots are not an important 137
item in Nuer diet. Their country is mainly treeless and fruits 262
therefore few; only 'wild dates' (*Balanites aegyptiaca*), found in 222
occasional patches to the west of the Nile and in more extensive
stretches to the east, provide much sustenance. The fruits ripen
from about January to March and both the kernels and their
sweet fleshy covering are eaten. A number of other fruits are
eaten, mainly by children. Initiated youths refuse most of them.
The seeds and roots of water-lilies (*Nymphaea lotus*), which are
found in pools and lagoons in the early dry season are much
relished. The seeds of 'wild rice' (*Oryza Barthii*) are collected [263]
and a number of wild plants that grow on village sites are used
as seasoning for porridge. In famine years much greater attention is paid to the wild harvest. 'Wild dates' are then a great
stand-by and people eat a wide range of fruits, ripening mainly
in the early part of the drought, which they neglect when hunger
is not severe, and make use of bush-yams and the seeds of wild
sorghum and other grasses.

VIII

It will have been noted that fishing, hunting, and collecting 221
are dry-season occupations and produce during that season the 262
necessary supplement to an insufficient milk diet. In the wet 241
season, when these activities are no longer profitable and the
milk yield tends to fall off, the heavy rains, which cause the
changes responsible for these losses in supply, produce conditions
suitable for horticulture, impossible in the drought, that will
replace them. The variation in food-supply throughout the year
and its sufficiency for life at all seasons is thus determined by
the annual cycle of oecological changes. Without grain in the
wet season Nuer would be in a parlous state; and since it can be
stored they can, also, to a small extent, make provision against
famine in the drought.

Climatic conditions together with flooding and the flatness 241
of the country make it impossible to cultivate most Central
African food plants in Nuerland, and the Nuer are especially
unfortunate in having no root crop as a reserve in famine years.

241 It may be doubted whether they could cultivate any crops other
than those they now sow, without extensive irrigation in the
dry season, and this is incompatible with their nomadism. These
crops do not make an imposing list. The staple crop is millet
(*Sorghum vulgare*), from which they reap two harvests, and they
sow some maize near their huts and a few beans (*Vigna*), their
only garden vegetable, among the millet. Besides these three
food plants they cultivate a little tobacco under the eaves of
their huts and plant some gourds to grow up kraal fences. The
[252] millet is consumed as porridge and beer; the maize is mainly
roasted, though some is eaten as porridge; the beans are eaten
stewed or cooked with porridge; the tobacco is used for smok-
[276] ing in pipes, as snuff, and for chewing; and the gourds are,
according to their species, either eaten or fashioned into dairy
vessels.

Millet, the main crop, is the only one of these plants to the cultivation of which we need make more than a passing reference. Once it is established it stands up well to conditions which would be fatal to most plants, and it is worthy of notice that wild species of sorghum flourish in this latitude. Maize is also hardy but, although it is important to Nuer because it is the first grain to be harvested when their supplies are running short or are exhausted, its quantity is negligible except on the banks of the Baro. Nuer distinguish between many types of millet, mainly by the colour of their seeds, and know which are early, and which late, varieties, in what order they ripen, which give good flour for porridge, and which have sweet stalks for chewing. The plant thrives in black clays which hold up water, but shows much adaptability and ripens also on the more sandy stretches on which the Nuer build their villages, though in such spots it has less resistance to drought and a second sowing is very uncertain. Eastern Jikany is probably the best millet country in Nuerland, and, although in many parts it is too flooded for a second crop, it is the only section I have seen which can generally be relied on to yield sufficient grain to support the population. Lak and Thiang tribal areas in the Zeraf Island, which I have not visited, are said to be good grain country.

Even millet will not flourish in standing water, so that the

gardens have to be made on higher land. Where circumstances 241
permit homesteads to be built over a wide stretch of country gardens can be made almost anywhere between them, but where they are strung out along a ridge there is less choice, for the back of the ridge is too hard, does not retain enough water, and is required for grazing. Cultivations are therefore made behind the huts and byres between the summit of the ridge and the sunken plain. Among the Western Nuer, in the higher parts [312]
where there is a slight slope, small dams are often constructed to prevent the water running from the gardens. If, on the contrary, the millet is likely to be flooded where the ridge slopes into the plain, drainage canals, sometimes several feet deep and over fifty yards in length, are dug to take excess of water into the bush. These gardens form a continuous line behind the homesteads and if there is sufficient land there for cultivation people do not cultivate elsewhere. If there is not enough land they cultivate along the ridge beyond the confines of the village where it is too damp for building but not too flooded for millet gardens, or in near-by forest.

There is enough land for everybody on the Nuer scale of 241
cultivation and consequently questions of tenure do not arise. 423
It is taken for granted that a man has a right to cultivate the ground behind his homestead unless some one is already using it, and a man can choose any spot outside the village which is not occupied by the gardens of others. New-comers are always in some way related to some of the villagers, and kinsmen do not dispute about gardens. Moreover, owing to the conformation of Nuer villages, there is a rough correlation between the size of population and the area of cultivable land, for where suitable land is limited so is space for building.

It has been remarked that when once established millet shows 241
great resistance to climatic variations. The difficulty is for it to become established. It frequently happens shortly after sowing that there is a short period of drought in which the young shoots wither and die. Sometimes this is due to the hungry people sowing too soon, but it is generally unavoidable, because if they wait too long before planting, the millet becomes subject to smut and neither bears nor ripens properly. It also frequently happens that heavy and violent rain destroys the

241 seedlings by beating them into the sticky clay or by washing the soil from their roots. I have not known a season in Nuerland in which drought or excessive rain did not in some measure destroy the crops after sowing. Elephants do much damage when the millet has passed the vulnerable seedling period and I have known the gardens of a village to be partially destroyed three years in succession by these beasts. Weaver-birds take an annual toll when the millet is ripening, but Nuer do nothing to scare them unless they are in such numbers that they threaten to consume the whole harvest, when they erect bird-watching platforms in the gardens. In some years—I do not know how often—the country is visited by locusts which cause immediate and wholesale destruction. At various stages of growth guinea-fowl, crows, ostriches, and some of the smaller antelopes do much damage, and waterbuck show a great liking for the second crop. Sometimes, though I think rarely, Nuer build huts in their gardens, if they are some way from the village, to guard the millet from these depredations, but generally they show little concern, hoping that the proximity of dwellings will keep animals away and, if it does not, accepting the consequences with a detachment that appears sometimes to be almost indifference.

HORTICULTURAL CALENDAR

221

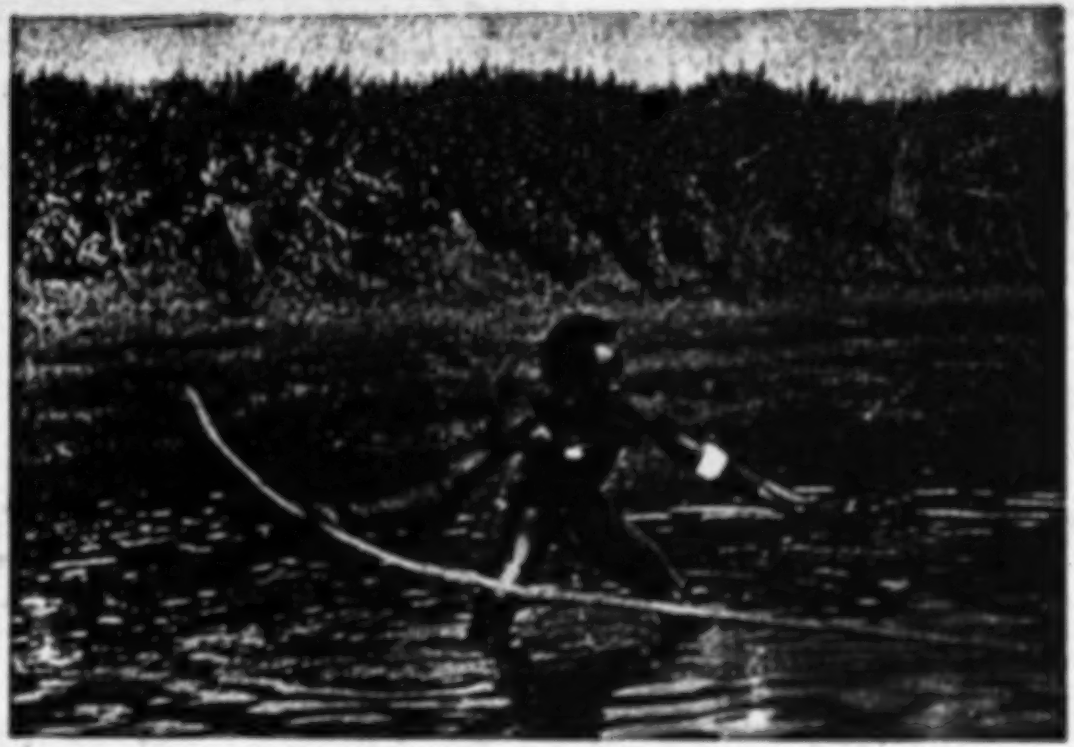
Apr.	*May*	*June*	*July*	*Aug.*	*Sept.*	*Oct.*	*Nov.*	*Dec.*	*Jan.*
Sow maize			Harvest maize						
	Sow first millet				Harvest first millet				
		Sow beans				Harvest beans			
			Sow *jaak* millet				Harvest *jaak* millet		
			Sow tobacco			Harvest tobacco			
					Sow second millet			Harvest second millet	

The calendar shown above is an approximation, since the time of sowing and harvesting depends on the commencement of the first heavy rains, which is subject to annual variations. The horticultural season generally begins at the end of March for those who are able to spend the drought in or near their homes on river banks, but most people have to wait till they can return to their villages in April or May before they can start clearing their gardens. Married people usually return to their villages in the first half of

PLATE X

226

[Face p. 78]



Harpoon-fishing in shallows (Sobat river)

244
221
May and start to prepare the ground around their homesteads for maize. At the end of the month, or in June, the younger people return with the cattle and assist in clearing last year's millet gardens and in the hard work of hoeing new ground. Prolific grasses spring up with the millet which has to be weeded at least three, and maybe four or five, times. The more weeding done for the first crop the less is needed for the second crop.

While the first crop is ripening adjacent strips are cleared for the second crop (Plate XI (*b*)), which is sown shortly before the first is harvested, at the end of August or in September, and it grows together with the new shoots that spring from the roots of the first crop after its stems have been chopped down. In Eastern Nuerland the second sowing is made among the standing crop or on an extension of the garden, but in Western Nuerland and in parts of the Zeraf Island the ground is so flooded that it is made on prepared mounds of earth. I would again draw attention to Plate XII, where these mounds are illustrated, for it admirably shows what Nuerland is like in the rains and conveys a clear impression of the obstacles confronting Nuer horticulture. The second crop has also to be weeded several times and, as the same garden will be used for the first sowing in the following rains, the more thoroughly it is weeded now the less work there will be to do then. In many parts of Nuerland the second harvest may be almost as big as the first, and it is probable that where local conditions are adverse to one crop they favour the other. It appears that while the sown millet of the second crop requires much moisture and will not flourish if the rains fall off early the millet which sprouts from the old stems does best in drier conditions and may be spoilt by late heavy showers, so that one or the other is likely to ripen, and in moderate conditions both may thrive.

[177] In some districts of the Lou and Eastern Jikany tribes the culture of a slow-maturing millet called *jaak* (*Sorghum durra*) has been copied from the Dinka. The spot chosen for cultivation is not burnt at the annual firing of the bush, but early in the following rains when the new grasses have sprung up among the old. Although this kind of millet has certain disadvantages it has caught on in a few places because it requires less clearing and weeding and is very hardy.

241 Nuer know nothing of crop rotation, having indeed no crops to rotate, nor of manures, though the droppings of cattle and the ashes of burnt weeds and brushwood no doubt act as fertilizers. They never allow their homestead gardens to lie fallow for a year to enable the soil to recuperate, but plant year

241 after year till it is utterly exhausted, when they change their homestead site, often moving for some years to a new village. Nevertheless, they know that each year of tillage means further deterioration and judge the impoverishment of the soil by the size of the millet plants and of their yield and by the presence of certain weeds which only flourish on exhausted ground. A garden is cultivated annually for from five to ten years and after it has been left fallow for a few seasons it is tested to see whether the soil is still hard and caked, or loose, soft, and ready to bear a new crop. In gardens cultivated in bush sites away from the villages, on the other hand, people are not confined by the gardens of their neighbours, and it is possible to hoe a virgin piece of ground each year at one end and to abandon an exhausted piece at the other end.

241 Nuer gardens are very small. Measurements do not give so clear an idea of their size as noting that in an average year the
262 people in most parts of Nuerland have just enough grain to last them till the following harvest, if they are very economical during the dry season and subsist mainly on milk and fish, while in a bad year they may have to go without porridge for
[251] several weeks. Also it may be noted that Nuer do not build granaries, but find small grass and earthenware bins, kept in their huts, sufficient for storage. However, we may judge how important millet is to them less by its quantity than by its place in their total food-supply, for it is not merely a subsidiary item of diet of high nutritive value but is an essential food, since they would be hard pressed to maintain life without it. Nuer fully acknowledge that this is so and in no way despise horticulture, but are, on the whole, industrious gardeners.

241 Nevertheless, they consider that horticulture is an unfortunate necessity involving hard and unpleasant labour and not an ideal occupation, and they tend to act on the conviction that the larger the herd the smaller need be the garden. They are herdsmen and not peasants. When I have drawn attention to badly kept gardens or remarked that the crops received no protection from beasts and birds they have been unperturbed, for, while it would be disgraceful to neglect cattle, there are no strong feelings about inattention to gardens. When I have asked them why they do not sow more millet I have

often received some such reply as: 'Oh well, such is our custom. We have cattle.' 241

I wish to emphasize, in conclusion, the following points: 241 (1) that Nuer cultivate only enough grain for it to be one element 231 in their food-supply and not enough to live on it alone; (2) that with their present climate and technology considerable increase in horticulture would be unprofitable; and (3) that the dominance of the pastoral value over horticultural interests is in accord with oecological relations which favour cattle husbandry at the expense of horticulture. Nuer values and oecological relations, therefore, combine to maintain the bias towards cattle husbandry, in spite of rinderpest having rendered it a more precarious occupation than hitherto.

IX

It has been mentioned that Nuer must have a mixed economy in the given oecological relations because no one source 262 221 of food is sufficient to keep them alive, and that the dominant food-producing activity at each season is determined by the oecological cycle. The different elements of diet, therefore, have an oecologically determined relation to one another and these relations can be roughly plotted.

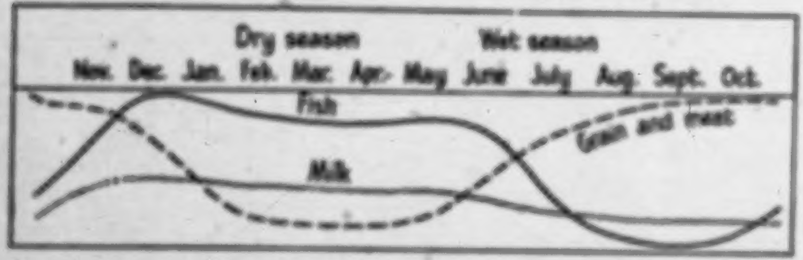
Milk foods, millet in the form of porridge and beer, a little maize, fish, and meat, are the main items of Nuer diet. Milk [234] is a staple food all the year round, though cows probably tend to give a smaller yield towards the end of the rains owing to insufficiency of pasturage, and it is said that there is a tendency for them to calve in numbers after the first harvest and therefore to cease lactating a few weeks earlier—if this is correct it is possibly due to the hot weather in February and March bringing the cows on heat. This seasonal tendency and the 262 respective contributions of cattle and millet to Nuer food- 538 supply are brought out in a story in which Cow and Millet 221 have a dispute. Cow says that Millet is a person of no importance and that it is her milk that keeps people alive throughout the year, while in time of famine they can eat her flesh and live. Millet replies that Cow's claims are doubtless just, but that when she is ripe the children are glad, for they chew the sweet stems and rub out the grain between their hands and eat it, 262 538 221 and there is plenty of porridge and beer. Cow argues that anyhow porridge without milk is unpalatable and that her milk will be finished by the time Millet is ripe. It is difficult to confirm these variations in the yield of milk or to estimate their importance, but the tendency for it to rise slightly in the dry season is indicated in the chart opposite.

262 221 Millet is consumed as porridge and beer in large quantities in the months between the first harvest and departure for dry-season camps. If the harvest has been good people like to eat their daily porridge in camps, and when the camp grain-supply runs short women journey to the villages to replenish it. When camps break up and people return to their villages millet consumption increases, beer being again brewed, and in a good year there is sufficient to satisfy requirements till the new harvest is ripe. In a normal year Nuer can just tide over these months if they are economical and have been careful not to use much grain in camp. Only in the most favoured parts of the country are they assured of an adequate supply throughout the year. In most parts there is always a very narrow margin between sufficiency and want, and in a bad year starvation is not infrequent. If the crops fail people survive on milk, fish, and wild fruits, and in extremity may kill some of their beasts. [731] Rinderpest is considered a worse calamity. When rinderpest and failure of crops occur in the same year people expect the older age-sets to be wiped out. Much suffering may be caused by excessive drought or flood, which injure both crops and grazing.

There are good and bad fishing years. Generally, over the greater part of the country, consumption of fish is very low, or entirely absent, at the height of the rains. It rises rapidly to a peak at the commencement of the dry weather, and after descending from this point of great abundance remains fairly constant through the drought, rising again in the early rains. Meat of domesticated stock is mainly eaten after harvest when sacrifices and feasts take place. Cattle are seldom slaughtered in the dry season and, in my experience, Nuer do not kill many wild animals, so that consumption of meat is very low at this time of year, though the deficiency is to some extent made up by bleeding the cows and, in rinderpest years, by eating the carcases of its victims. On the whole the curve of meat con-

sumption follows that of grain consumption. We need not 262
consider consumption of bush products in a normal year, 221
though it may be kept in mind that they are very useful in famine years, chiefly from January to April.

It will be seen from this chart of relative consumption, which is only presented as a virtual approximation, that fish largely takes the place of grain and meat as the principal food from January to June and that the time when there is most likely to be a shortage of milk and when few, or no, fish are caught is that when there is plenty of porridge and beer. 'The hungry months', as the Nuer call them, are from May to August when the supply of fish quickly diminishes and maize and millet are still ripening. The months of plenty are from September to the middle of December, when there is abundant millet, and generally much meat, while the end of this period is the best time for fishing. Nuer say that they put on flesh in the rains and lose it in the drought. We may conclude, I think, that even in [146]
normal years Nuer do not receive as much nourishment as they require. Their diet is well-balanced, but there is not enough of it at some seasons and there is no surplus to fall back on in the all-too-frequent years of scarcity. Much of Nuer custom and thought is to be attributed to this insufficiency of food. It is [538]
wistfully related in one of their stories how once upon a time Man's stomach led an independent life in the bush and lived on small insects roasted by the firing of the grasses, for 'Man was not created with a stomach. It was created apart from him.' One day Man was walking in the bush and came across Stomach there and put it in its present place that it might feed there. Although when it lived by itself it was satisfied with tiny morsels of food, it is now always hungry. No matter how much it eats it is soon craving for more.

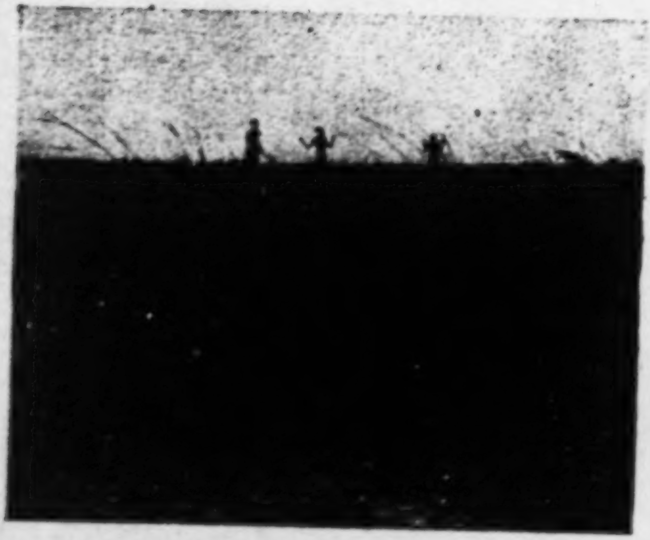


1· Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

221 Seasonal variation in quantity and kind of food is sociologically significant for several reasons, though not all are relevant to the present study. It is, however, important to note that abundance of millet is the main reason for holding ceremonies in the rains, for ritual is seldom complete without porridge and beer and, since it consists of sacrifice, of meat also. Weddings, initiation rites, and religious ceremonies of various kinds take place in the rains and early drought, generally after the first millet harvest. This is also the main season for [221] raiding the Dinka. Nuer say that hunger and war are bad companions and that they are too hungry to fight in the full dry season; and it is evident that they are then not so eager to come to blows over personal and community quarrels as they are in the rainy months, when they are replete with grain and meat and, especially at wedding dances, sometimes slightly intoxicated. 535 Nor do the young men find dancing so attractive in the drought, whereas in the rains they dance as much as possible and think nothing of travelling many miles to attend weddings, at which they dance from eventide till well into the morning. The tempo of village life is different from that of camp life. Owing to flooding at the height of the rains these joint activities take place mainly at the beginning and end—chiefly at the end—of the wet season.

264 Scarcity of food at times and the narrow margin that for most of the year divides sufficiency from famine cause a high 574 degree of interdependence among members of the smaller local groups, which may be said to have a common stock of food. Although each household owns its own food, does its own cooking, and provides independently for the needs of its members, men, and much less, women and children, eat in one another's homes to such an extent that, looked at from outside, the whole community is seen to be partaking of a joint supply. Rules of hospitality and conventions about the division of meat and fish lead to a far wider sharing of food than a bare statement of the principles of ownership would suggest. Young men eat at all byres in the vicinity; every household gives beer parties which their neighbours and kinsmen attend; the same people are given food and beer at the co-operative work parties that assist in any difficult and laborious task; in camps it is

PLATE XI



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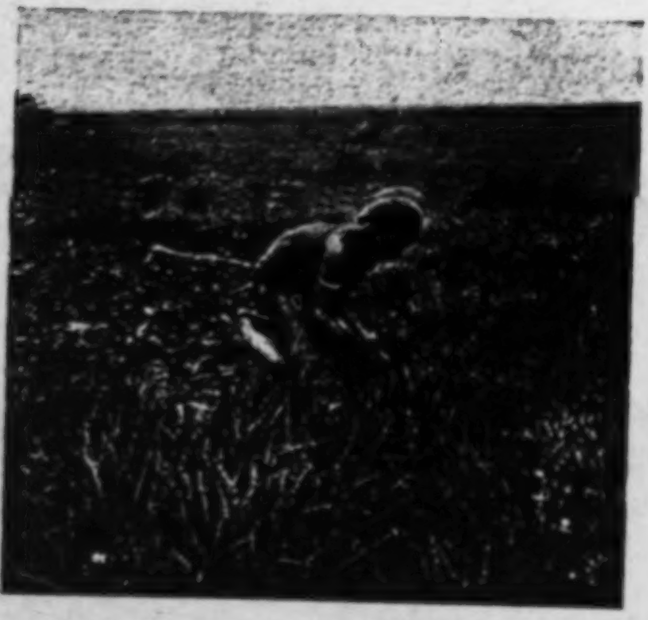
a. Open savannah in the dry season (Lou)



241

b. Clearing millet garden for late sowing (Lou)

[Face p. 84]

264
574
considered correct for men to visit the windscreens of their friends to drink milk, and a special gourd of sour milk is kept for guests; when an ox is sacrificed or a wild animal is killed the meat is always, in one way or another, widely distributed; people are expected to give part of their catch of fish to those who ask them for it; people assist one another when there is a shortage of milk or grain; and so forth. This mutual assistance and common consumption of food, which is especially evident in compact dry-season camps, belongs rather to the subject of domestic and kinship relations than to the present account. I wish here only to stress the following points: (1) This habit of share and share alike is easily understandable in a community where every one is likely to find himself in difficulties from time to time, for it is scarcity and not sufficiency that makes people generous, since everybody is thereby insured against hunger. He who is in need to-day receives help from him who may be in like need to-morrow. (2) While the greatest sharing is in the smaller domestic and kinship groups, there is also so much mutual assistance and hospitality among members of villages and camps that one may speak of a common economy of these communities, which are treated in this book as the smallest political groups in Nuerland and within which are taken for granted ties of kinship, affinity, age-sets, and so forth.

X

000 I have examined Nuer food-supply in relation to their oecology and I now give a brief account of their material culture in the same terms. When a Nuer is born he enters not only into a natural environment but also into a domesticated environment which is the product of human labour; and this inner world is constructed from the outer world, its form and content being strictly limited by natural resources. I am neither desirous nor capable of describing technological procedures, and to excuse myself in some degree for this omission I am including in this and in a second volume an unusually large number of plates and figures illustrating many examples of Nuer handiwork. However, some general remarks on the limiting conditions of production seem pertinent.

135 Nuerland lacks the two raw materials that have played so
important a part in the manufacture of primitive tools: iron and
stone. Nuer have always been poor in iron objects. Till recently
411 they possessed very few iron spears, cherished as heirlooms, but
used instead the straightened horns of antelope and buck, ebony
wood, and the rib-bones of giraffe, all of which are still used to-day,
412 though almost entirely in dances (Fig. 11). Wooden hoes were
used for gardening, and are still sometimes so used to-day. Iron
301 bells (Fig. 4) are rare and highly prized even at the present time,
and in the old days iron rings and bracelets were important pieces
of property. Wooden bells and ivory and leather rings and bracelets
took their place in common use. Nuer have no knowledge of
325 smelting and little of the blacksmith's art. I have never seen a
forge and, though there are certainly some blacksmiths, their art
is crude and may be regarded as a recent innovation, at any
rate in most parts of Nuerland. Spears bought from Arab merchants
are beaten out in the cold.

135 Nuerland also lacks any kind of hard stone. Indeed, outside
villages I have never seen a stone. They are sometimes brought
412 from neighbouring areas and employed as hammers, for smoothing
323 metal ornaments, for rubbing skins, and so on. Grinding grain seems
to have been a recent introduction. The grinder is made from
thornwood and the grindstone from baked marsh mud mixed
with finely pounded potsherds (Fig. 12). With clay, mud, and sand,
Nuer also make pots, grain-bins, pipes, toys, hearthstones, and
firescreens; construct the walls of byres and huts; and coat floors
and those parts of homesteads they wish to keep smooth and clean.

Nature, which denies them iron and stone, is niggardly in her
137 gift of wood. Large trees are rare. Thornwood and low brushwood
322 provide timber for building, spear-shafts, harpoon-shafts,
clubs (Frontispiece and Plate VIII), pestles, neck-rests, baskets,
and winnowing trays. Probably no trees in Nuerland are suitable
for carving and Nuer possess no wooden utensils. Even the
ebony they use for making spears is not found in their country.
Ambatch-trees grow in some parts of the swamp areas and from it
is made an object which serves as a parrying stick, tobacco pouch,
[372] pillow, and seat (Plate XXIX). Byre and kraal fires are fed with
dried dung, and wood fuel is only employed in the kitchen—
grasses and millet stalks sometimes being used as a substitute.
Grasses, millet stalks, and some plants are also used for various
purposes: rafters, windscreens, thatching, cord, basketwork, &c.
Gourds are cultivated for dairy utensils.

237 Lacking iron and stone Nuer thus make use of vegetable and
earthy materials instead. Animal products are also a valuable

source of material, as may be seen in the list of the uses of the bodies and bodily products of cattle on pp. 28 and 30. The bodies of wild animals replace those of cattle in some, but not many, of these uses, e.g. the skins of tiang and cob are used as sleeping-rugs, waterbuck-skin for the tympana of drums, giraffe-skin for cord, the scrota of giraffe for bags (Fig. 3), the horns of buffalo for spoons (Fig. 14), and the bones and hides of various animals and the tusks of elephants for armlets, leglets, wristlets, finger-rings, &c., and so forth. They can further be employed, though here also to a limited extent, for purposes for which bovine products are unsuitable, e.g. hippopotamus- and buffalo-hide for shields and sandals, elephant-hide also being used for the second purpose; horns and ribs, as mentioned above, for spear-points; leopard- and genet-skins for ritual and ceremonial apparel; and so forth. Ostrich eggs and shells of the giant land snail are manufactured into waist-bands and the second are used for cutting heads of millet in harvesting. 237

I have indicated a few of the uses to which animal products are put to give the reader a general idea of the limitations imposed on Nuer economy by their environment and of the way they manage to overcome the natural poverty of their country. Taken with the earlier list of uses of cattle we can say that the Nuer do not live in an iron age or even in a stone age, but in an age, whatever it may be called, in which plants and beasts furnish technological necessities.

Deficiency of food and other raw materials can be corrected by trade. However, Nuer seem to have engaged very little in it. Many of their iron weapons and ornaments probably came through Dinka hands from the so-called Jur peoples (Bongo-Mittu group) and the iron-working sections of Dinka tribes to the west of the Nile. Much of it was doubtless booty, though some was certainly traded.[1] The Eastern Gaajak traded iron for ivory with the Galla of Ethiopia, but I doubt whether much iron came from this source before the Abyssinian conquest of the Western Galla towards the end of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the present century there was some trading of ivory from Nuerland to the Ethiopian markets at Gore and Sayo, and this went on till very recently. A considerable distance separated these markets from the main supply in the *Zeraf* Island, and people from Eastern Gaajak country in the dry season, at any rate in some seasons, took cattle, tobacco, and spearheads to the Zeraf and returned with ivory. A good tusk fetched up to twenty 439

[1] Poncet, op. cit., p. 44.

439 head of cattle.[1] This trade was forbidden some years ago and has probably not a long history, because early writers give no information that might lead us to suppose that it went on previous to the reconquest of the Sudan and the Abyssinian conquest of Western Ethiopia. There was some ivory-trading on the Zeraf between Nuer and Arabs from the middle of the nineteenth century. Metal ornaments and venetian glass beads seem to have been offered in exchange. Nuer may have traded some tobacco, and possibly an occasional canoe, from the Anuak of the Baro and Gila rivers, but it is more likely that they usually acquired these objects by raiding. I do not discuss here the very small trade carried on to-day by Arab shopkeepers who live a hard, and generally unprofitable, life here and there on the main waterways. Nuer obtain from them spears, hoes, fish-hooks, ornaments, and occasionally an anvil, grindstone, &c., and they purchase skins of oxen, and sometimes oxen, from the Nuer. Nuer economy has not been much affected thereby. Nuer do not sell their labour.

We may conclude, therefore, that trade is a very unimportant social process among the Nuer. Many reasons can be adduced to explain this fact. I mention only a few. Nuer have nothing to trade except their cattle and have no inclination to dispose of these; all they greatly desire are more cattle, and, apart from the difficulty that they have nothing to offer in exchange for them, herds are more easily and pleasantly increased by raiding the Dinka; they are seldom on such friendly terms with their neighbours that trade can flourish between them, and, although there may have been sporadic exchange with Dinka and Anuak, it is probable that most objects obtained from these peoples were
[436] spoil; they have no money, no markets, and no transport other than

spoil; they have no money, no markets, and no transport other than

[489] human porterage; &c. A further reason, and one that requires emphasis, is the dominant interest of the Nuer in their herds. This narrow focus of interest causes them to be inattentive to the products of other people, for which, indeed, they feel no need and often enough show contempt.

437 There is very little exchange within Nuerland itself, there being no high specialization and no diversity in the distribution of raw material. The only trading I have seen, apart from the exchange of small commodities and minor services mentioned in the next section, is the exchange of some cattle, mainly oxen, by the Lou for Eastern Gaajok grain in a famine year. I think it most unlikely that such exchanges went on before British occupation of the country, though there was, according to Nuer, sometimes an exchange of an animal for grain in bad years between persons of the same district.

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[1] Bimbashi H. Gordon, *Sudan Intelligence Report*, no. 107, 1903.

Nuer have, it will be acknowledged, a low technology which, taken with their meagre food-supply and scanty trade, may be supposed to have some effect on their social relations and their character. Social ties are narrowed, as it were, and the people of village and camp are drawn closer together, in a moral sense, for they are in consequence highly interdependent and their activities tend to be joint undertakings. This is seen best in the dry season, when the cattle of many families are tethered in a common kraal and driven as a single herd to the grazing grounds and daily activities are co-ordinated into a common rhythm of life.

I risk being accused of speaking idly when I suggest that a very simple material culture narrows social ties in another way. Technology from one point of view is an oecological process: an adaptation of human behaviour to natural circumstances. From another point of view material culture may be regarded as part of social relations, for material objects are chains along which social relationships run, and the more simple is a material culture the more numerous are the relationships expressed through it. I give, without further explanation, a few examples. The simple family is attached to the hut, the household to the byre, the joint family to the hamlet, the village community to its ridge, and village communities are linked together by paths. Herds of cattle are nuclei around which kinship groups are clustered and the relationships

are clustered and the relationships

between their members operate through cattle and are expressed in terms of cattle. A single small artifact may be a nexus between persons, e.g. a spear which passes from father to son by gift or inheritance is a symbol of their relationship and one of the bonds by which it is maintained. Thus people not only create their material culture and attach themselves to it, but also build up their relationships through it and see them in terms of it. As Nuer have very few kinds of material objects and very few specimens of each kind, their social value is increased by their having to serve as the media of many relationships and they are, in consequence, often invested with ritual functions. Moreover social relationships instead of being diffused along many chains of material links are narrowed by the meagreness of culture to a few simple foci of interest. This

571 may be supposed to lead to a small range of relationship-forms with a high degree of solidarity in the smaller local and kinship groups and we may expect to find a simple social structure.

181 Some outstanding traits in Nuer character may be said to be consistent with their low technology and scanty food-supply. I again emphasize the crudity and discomfort of their lives. All who have lived with Nuer would, I believe, agree that though they are very poor in goods they are very proud in spirit. Schooled in hardship and hunger—for both they express contempt—they accept the direst calamities with resignation and endure them with courage. Content with few goods they despise all that lies outside them; their derisive pride amazes a stranger. Reliant on one another they are loyal and generous to their kinsmen. One might even to some extent attribute their pronounced individualism to resistance to the persistent claims of kinsmen and neighbours against which they have no protection but stubbornness. The qualities which have been mentioned, courage, generosity, patience, pride, loyalty, stubbornness, and independence, are the virtues the Nuer themselves extol, and these values can be shown to be very appropriate to their simple mode of life and to the simple set of social relations it engenders.

XI

571 463 It is unnecessary to write more on what are generally called economics. They can be further considered in an account of kinship and family life. I will only ask the reader to bear in mind the following matters. (1) One cannot treat Nuer economic relations by themselves, for they always form part of direct social relationships of a general kind. Thus, division of labour is part of general relationships between persons of different sexes and of different ages, between spouses, between parents and children, between kinsmen of one order or another, and so forth. (2) There is some specialization, but it is occasional, and there are no occupations which can be called professions. Some women make better pots, grindstones, and baskets than others; only smiths can make certain objects; there are only a few men who understand how to make and put on the arm the tight-fitting bracelets which young men wear to show their endurance, and so on; and people who want these things either ask for them in the name of kinship or give the maker of them some millet for his services, or make him a gift on some future occasion. The man who wants the object

PLATE XII

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Millet garden in October (Rengyan)

[Face p. 90]

571 and the maker of it always belong to the same local community
463 and conduct the affair between themselves, there being no ex-
change of objects or services through the medium of a third
person, and there is always between them a general social relation-
ship of one kind or another, and their economic relations, if such
they may be called, must conform to this general pattern of
571 behaviour. (3) There is little inequality of wealth and no class
privilege. A man does not acquire more objects than he can use.
565 Were he to do so he could only dispose of them by giving them
[578] away. It is true that cattle can be amassed, but, except for a few
sacred herds kept by prophets, in fact they are not. As has been
explained, periodic rinderpest levels the herds and, apart from
this, when a herd has reached a certain size the owner—if one may
speak of an owner of a herd in which many people have rights of
one kind and another—is morally bound to dispose of a portion of
it by either himself marrying or by assisting a relative to do so.
Cattle are sometimes loaned to persons and the owner is entitled
to receive back better beasts than those he lent, e.g. a heifer for
the loan of an ox; but people only lend cattle to those with whom
571 they have an established social relationship. (4) In a narrow sense
the simple family might be called the economic unit, but we have
476 seen that it is not self-sufficient and the active participation of a
wider group is often necessary, e.g. in building, fishing, and hunting. It is also clear that a single family cannot herd its cattle in distant pastures and, at the same time, herd the calves elsewhere, attend to the tiny calves in the kraal, milk, churn, clean the kraal, prepare dung for fuel, cook the food, and so on, by itself. Co-operation is found among neighbours who are also kinsmen. There is also much mutual assistance when co-operation is not essential to the performance of a task, e.g. in weeding and harvesting, for it is conventional to ask people for help, the obligation to assist being part of a general kinship relationship. (5) It must be recognised also that fishing, hunting, herding, and the other activities I have described are always, in a sense, collective actions, for even when there is no active co-operation the whole community passively participates in them. A single man may drive a herd to pasture, a single boy may fish in river shallows, and a single woman may cook, but they can only do these things because they belong to a community and because their actions are related in a productive system. Tradition dictates ends and means and the organization and potential strength of the community gives the co-ordination and security necessary for accomplishment. It has been remarked that seen from the outside a whole village community may be said to be consuming a common stock of food.

571 476 From the same angle the whole community may be said to create it.

I may sum up by repeating that economic relations among the Nuer are part of general social relationships and that these relationships, being mainly of a domestic or kinship order, lie outside the scope of this book. I must emphasize, however, that the members of various segments of a village have close economic relations and that all the people of a village have common economic interests, forming a corporation which owns its particular gardens, water-supplies, fishing-pools, and grazing grounds; which herds its cattle in a compact camp in the drought; and operates jointly in defence, in herding, and in other activities; and in which, especially in the smaller villages, there is much co-operation in labour and sharing of food. All this must be taken for granted in future references to villages. It must be further emphasized that climatic conditions together with a pastoral mode of life necessitate relations beyond the limits of a village and give to wider political groups an economic purpose. This statement will later be examined more closely.

XII

105 I wish to emphasize the following general points in summary of those conclusions reached in the first two chapters which have special relevance to a study of the political institutions of the Nuer.

1. Oecological relations appear to be in a state of equilibrium. As long as present relations exist cattle husbandry, horticulture, and fishing can be pursued but cannot be improved. Man holds his own in the struggle but does not advance.

2. The necessity of a mixed economy follows from the oecological equilibrium. Rinderpest prevents complete dependence upon milk foods; climate prevents complete dependence on grain; and hydrological variations prevent complete dependence on fish. These three elements together enable Nuer to live, and their seasonal distribution determines Nuer modes of life at different periods of the year.

3. The oecology gives to this mixed economy a bias in favour of cattle husbandry, and this bias must have been far stronger

before the introduction of rinderpest. It is in accord with the superlative place of cattle in the Nuer scale of values.

4. A full sedentary and a full nomadic life are alike incompatible with Nuer economy, which demands transhumance. Location and size of wet season villages and the direction of movement in the dry season are determined by their oecology. The oecological rhythm divides the Nuer year into two divisions, the wet season when they live in villages and the dry season when they live in camps, and camp life falls into two parts, the earlier period of small, temporary camps and the later period of large concentrations in sites occupied every year.

5. Scarcity of food, a low technology, and absence of trade makes the members of smaller local groups directly interdependent and tends to make them economic corporations and not merely residential units to which a certain political value is attached. The same conditions and the pursuit of a pastoral life in difficult circumstances produces indirect interdependence between persons living in much larger areas and compels their acceptance of conventions of a political order.

6. The past tendency to migrate, the present transhumance, and the desire to repair losses to stock by raiding the Dinka, enhance the political importance of units larger than villages, for villages cannot, for economic and military reasons, easily *maintain a self-sufficient isolation, and* permit us to discuss the political system mainly as a set of structural relations between territorial segments larger than village communities.

CHAPTER III

TIME AND SPACE

I

121 In this chapter we look backwards on our description of Nuer interest in cattle and of their oecology and forwards to an account of their political structure. Their oecology limits and in other ways influences their social relations, but the value given to oecological relations is equally significant in understanding the social system, which is a system within the oecological system, partly dependent on it and partly existing in its own right. Ultimately most, perhaps all, concepts of time and space are determined by the physical ambient, but the values they embody are only one of many possible responses to it and depend also on structural principles, which belong to a different order of reality. In this book we are not describing Nuer cosmology but their political and other institutions, and are, therefore, interested mainly in the influence of oecological relations on these institutions rather than the influence of the social structure on the conceptualization of the oecological relations. Thus, to give one example, we do not describe how Nuer classify birds into various lineages on the pattern of their lineage structure. This chapter is therefore a bridge between the two parts of the book, but we cross it in one direction only.

885 In describing Nuer concepts of time we may distinguish between those that are mainly reflections of their relations to environment, which we call oecological time, and those that are reflections of their relations to one another in the social structure, which we call structural time. Both refer to successions of events which are of sufficient interest to the community for them to be noted and related to each other conceptually. The larger periods of time are almost entirely structural, because the events they relate are changes in the relationship of social groups. Moreover, time-reckoning based on changes in nature and man's response to them is limited to an annual cycle and therefore cannot be used to differentiate longer periods than seasons. Both, also, have limited and fixed notations. Seasonal

and lunar changes repeat themselves year after year, so that a Nuer standing at any point of time has conceptual knowledge of what lies before him and can predict and organize his life accordingly. A man's structural future is likewise already fixed and ordered into different periods, so that the total changes in status a boy will undergo in his ordained passage through the social system, if he lives long enough, can be foreseen. Structural time appears to an individual passing through the social system to be entirely progressive, but, as we shall see, in a sense this is an illusion. Oecological time appears to be, and is, cyclical. 865

The oecological cycle is a year. Its distinctive rhythm is the backwards and forwards movement from villages to camps, which is the Nuer's response to the climatic dichotomy of rains and drought. The year (*ruon*) has two main seasons, *tot* and *mai*. *Tot*, from about the middle of March to the middle of September, roughly corresponds to the rise in the curve of rainfall, though it does not cover the whole period of the rains. Rain may fall heavily at the end of September and in early October, and the country is still flooded in these months which belong, nevertheless, to the *mai* half of the year, for it commences at the decline of the rains—not at their cessation—and roughly covers the trough of the curve, from about the middle of September to the middle of March. The two seasons therefore only approximate to our division into rains and drought, and the Nuer classification aptly summarizes their way of looking at the movement of time, the direction of attention in marginal months being as significant as the actual climatic conditions. In the middle of September Nuer turn, as it were, towards the life of fishing and cattle camps and feel that village residence and horticulture lie behind them. They begin to speak of camps as though they were already in being, and long to be on the move. This restlessness is even more marked towards the end of the drought when, noting cloudy skies, people turn towards the life of villages and make preparations for striking camp. Marginal months may therefore be classed as *tot* or *mai*, since they belong to one set of activities but presage the other set, for the concept of seasons is derived from social activities rather than from the climatic changes which determine them, and a year is to Nuer 885 221

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a period of village residence (*cieng*) and a period of camp residence (*wec*).

I have already noted the significant physical changes associated with rains and drought, and some of these have been presented in charts on pp. 52 and 53. I have also described, in the last chapter, the oecological movement that follows these physical changes where it affects human life to any degree. Seasonal variations in social activities, on which Nuer concepts of time are primarily based, have also been indicated and, on the economic side, recorded at some length. The main features of these three planes of rhythm, physical, oecological, and social, are charted on the opposite page.

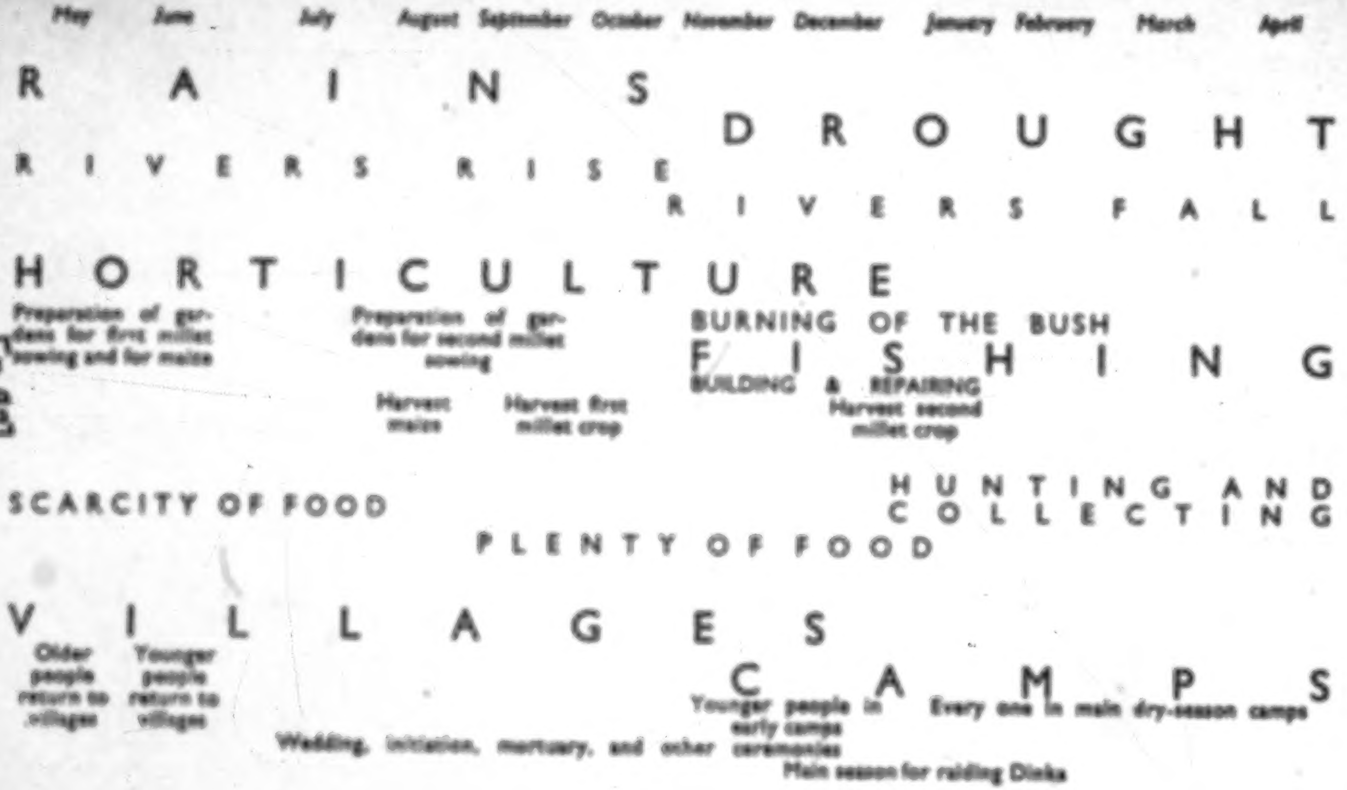
The movements of the heavenly bodies other than the sun and the moon, the direction and variation of winds, and the migration of some species of birds are observed by the Nuer, but they do not regulate their activities in relation to them nor use them as points of reference in seasonal time-reckoning. The characters by which seasons are most clearly defined are those which control the movements of the people: water, vegetation, movements of fish, &c.; it being the needs of the cattle and variations in food-supply which chiefly translate oecological rhythm into the social rhythm of the year, and the contrast between modes of life at the height of the rains and at the height of the drought which provides the conceptual poles in time-reckoning.

Besides these two main seasons of *tot* and *mai* Nuer recognize two subsidiary seasons included in them, being transitional periods between them. The four seasons are not sharp divisions but overlap. Just as we reckon summer and winter as the halves of our year and speak also of spring and autumn, so Nuer reckon *tot* and *mai* as halves of their year and speak also of the seasons of *rwil* and *jiom*. *Rwil* is the time of moving from camp to village and of clearing and planting, from about the middle of March to the middle of June, before the rains have reached their peak. It counts as part of the *tot* half of the year, though it is contrasted with *tot* proper, the period of full village life and horticulture, from about the middle of June to the middle of September. *Jiom*, meaning 'wind', is the period in which the persistent north wind begins to blow and people harvest, fish

[p. 97 contains no textual material]

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

[p.97]



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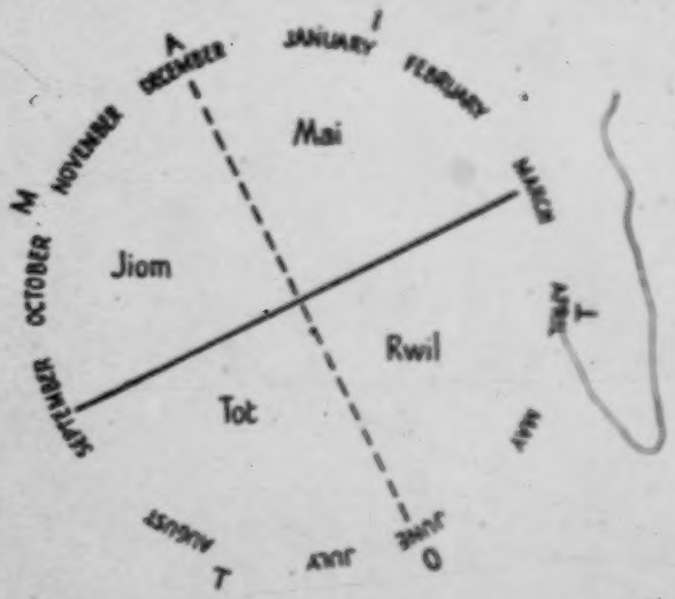
from dams, fire the bush, and form early camps, from about the middle of September to the middle of December. It counts as part of the *mai* half of the year, though it is contrasted with *mai* proper, from about the middle of December to the middle of March, when the main camps are formed. Roughly speaking, therefore, there are two major seasons of six months and four



minor seasons of three months, but these divisions must not be regarded too rigidly since they are not so much exact units of time as rather vague conceptualizations of changes in oecological relations and social activities which pass imperceptibly from one state to another.

In the diagram above a line drawn from mid March to mid September is the axis of the year, being an approximation to a cleavage between two opposed sets of oecological relations and social activities, though not entirely corresponding to it, as may be seen in the diagram below, where village life and camp life are shown in relation to the seasons of which they are the focal points. Nuer, especially the younger people, are still in camp for part of *tot* (the greater part of *rwil*) and are still in villages, especially the older people, for part of *mai* (the greater part of

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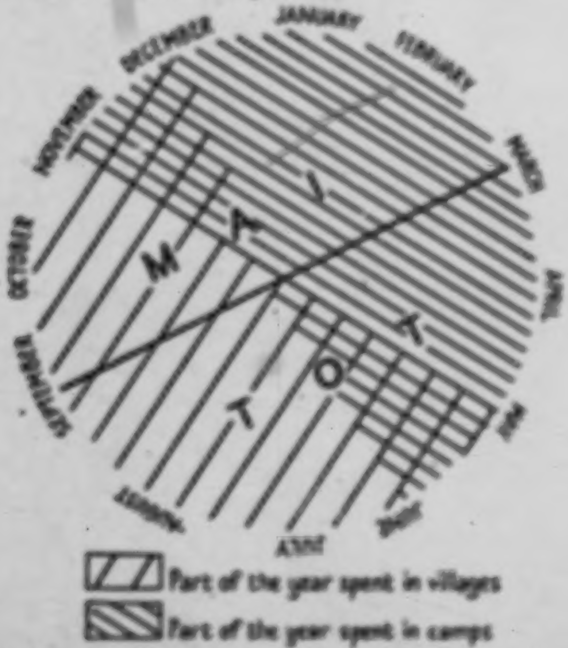
jiom), but every one is in villages during *tot* proper and in camps during *mai* proper. Since the words *tot* and *mai* are not pure units of time-reckoning but stand for the cluster of social activities characteristic of the height of the drought and of the height of the rains, one may hear a Nuer saying that he is going to '*tot*' or '*mai*' in a certain place.



▨ Part of the year spent in villages

▧ Part of the year spent in camps

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The year has twelve months, six to each of the major seasons, and most adult Nuer can state them in order. In the list of months given below it has not been possible to equate each Nuer name with an English name, because our Roman months have nothing to do with the moon. It will be found, however, that a Nuer month is usually covered by the two English months equated to it in the list and generally tends to coincide with the first rather than the second.

teer	Sept.–Oct.	*duong*	Mar.–Apr.
lath (*boor*)	Oct.–Nov.	*gwaak*	Apr.–May
kur	Nov.–Dec.	*dwat*	May–June
tiop (*in*) *dit*	Dec.–Jan.	*kornyuot*	June–July
tiop (*in*) *tot*	Jan.–Feb.	*paiyatni* (*paiyene*)	July–Aug.
pet	Feb.–Mar.	*thoor*	Aug.–Sept.

805 221 Nuer would soon be in difficulties over their lunar calendar if they consistently counted the succession of moons,[1] but there are certain activities associated with each month, the association sometimes being indicated by the name of the month. The calendar is a relation between a cycle of activities and a conceptual cycle and the two cannot fall apart, since the conceptual cycle is dependent on the cycle of activities from which it derives its meaning and function. Thus a twelve-month system does not incommode Nuer, for the calendar is anchored to the cycle of oecological changes. In the month of *kur* one makes the first fishing dams and forms the first cattle camps, and since one is doing these things it must be *kur* or thereabouts. Likewise in *dwat* one breaks camp and returns to the villages, and since people are on the move it must be *dwat* or thereabouts. Consequently the calendar remains fairly stable and in any section of Nuerland there is general agreement about the name of the current month.

In my experience Nuer do not to any great extent use the names of the months to indicate the time of an event, but generally refer instead to some outstanding activity in process at the time of its occurrence, e.g. at the time of early camps, at the time of weeding, at the time of harvesting, &c., and it is easily understandable that they do so, since time is to them a relation between activities. During the rains the stages in the growth of millet and the steps taken in its culture are often used as points of reference. Pastoral activities, being largely undifferentiated throughout the months and seasons, do not provide suitable points.

805 There are no units of time between the month and day and night. People indicate the occurrence of an event more than a day or two ago by reference to some other event which took place at the same time or by counting the number of intervening 'sleeps' or, less commonly, 'suns'. There are terms for to-day, to-morrow, yesterday, &c., but there is no precision about them. When Nuer wish to define the occurrence of an event several days in advance, such as a dance or wedding, they do so by

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[1] There is some evidence of an intercalary month among the Eastern Jikany, but I cannot be definite on this point, and I have not heard it mentioned in other parts of Nuerland.

reference to the phases of the moon: new moon, its waxing, 845 full moon, its waning, and the brightness of its second quarter. When they wish to be precise they state on which night of the waxing or waning an event will take place, reckoning fifteen nights to each and thirty to the month. They say that only [1-1] cattle and the Anuak can see the moon in its invisible period. The only terms applied to the nightly succession of lunar phases are those that describe its appearance just before, and in, fullness.

The course of the sun determines many points of reference, and a common way of indicating the time of events is by pointing to that part of the heavens the sun will then have reached in its course. There are also a number of expressions, varying in the degree of their precision, which describe positions of the sun in the heavens, though, in my experience, the only ones commonly employed are those that refer to its more conspicuously differentiated movements: the first stroke of dawn, sunrise, noon, and sunset. It is, perhaps, significant that there are almost as many points of reference between 4 and 6 a.m. as there are for the rest of the day. This may be chiefly due to striking contrasts caused by changes in relations of earth to sun during these two hours, but it may be noted, also, that the points of reference between them are more used in directing activities, such as starting on journeys, rising from sleep, tethering cattle in kraals, gazelle hunting, &c., than points of reference during most of the rest of the day, especially in the slack time between 1 and 3 p.m. There are also a number of terms to describe the time of night. They are to a very limited extent determined by the course of the stars. Here again, there is a richer terminology for the transition period between day and night than during the rest of the night and the same reasons may be suggested to explain this fact. There are also expressions for distinguishing night from day, forenoon from afternoon, and that part of the day which is spent from that part which lies ahead.

Except for the commonest of the terms for divisions of the day they are little used in comparison with expressions which describe routine diurnal activities. The daily timepiece is the cattle clock, the round of pastoral tasks, and the time of day and the passage of time through a day are to a Nuer primarily the succession of these tasks and their relations to one another. The better demarcated points are taking of the cattle from byre to kraal, milking, driving of the adult herd to pasture, milking of the goats and sheep, driving of the flocks and calves to pasture, cleaning of byre and kraal, bringing home of the flocks and calves, the return of the adult herd, the evening milking, and the enclosure of the beasts in byres. Nuer generally use such points of activity, rather than concrete points in the movement of the sun across the heavens, to co-ordinate events. Thus a man says, 'I shall return at milking', 'I shall start off when the calves come home', and so forth.

Oecological time-reckoning is ultimately, of course, entirely determined by the movement of the heavenly bodies, but only some of its units and notations are directly based on these movements, e.g. month, day, night, and some parts of the day and night, and such points of reference are paid attention to and selected as points only because they are significant for social activities. It is the activities themselves, chiefly of an economic kind, which are basic to the system and furnish most of its units and notations, and the passage of time is perceived in the relation of activities to one another. Since activities are dependent on the movement of the heavenly bodies and since the movement of the heavenly bodies is significant only in relation to the activities one may often refer to either in indication of the time of an event. Thus one may say, 'In the *jiom* season' or 'At early camps', 'The month of *Dwat*' or 'The return to villages', 'When the sun is warming up' or 'At milking'. The movements of the heavenly bodies permit Nuer to select natural points that are significant in relation to activities. Hence in linguistic usage nights, or rather 'sleeps', are more clearly defined units of time than days, or 'suns', because they are undifferentiated units of social activity, and months, or rather 'moons', though they are clearly differentiated units of natural time, are little employed as points of reference because they are not clearly differentiated units of activity, whereas the day, the year, and its main seasons are complete occupational units.

Certain conclusions may be drawn from this quality of time among the Nuer. Time has not the same value throughout the year. Thus in dry season camps, although daily pastoral tasks follow one another in the same order as in the rains, they do not take place at the same time, are more a precise routine owing to the severity of seasonal conditions, especially with regard to water and pasturage, and require greater co-ordination and co-operative action. On the other hand, life in the dry season is generally uneventful, outside routine tasks, and oecological and social relations are more monotonous from month to month than in the rains when there are frequent feasts, dances, and ceremonies. When time is considered as relations between activities it will be understood that it has a different connotation in rains and drought. In the drought the daily time-reckoning is more uniform and precise while lunar reckoning receives less attention, as appears from the lesser use of names of months, less confidence in stating their order, and the common East African trait of two dry-season months with the same name (*tiop in dit* and *tiop in tot*), the order of which is often interchanged. The pace of time may vary accordingly, since perception of time is a function of systems of time-reckoning, but we can make no definite statement on this question.

Though I have spoken of time and units of time the Nuer have no expression equivalent to 'time' in our language, and they cannot, therefore, as we can, speak of time as though it were something actual, which passes, can be wasted, can be saved, and so forth. I do not think that they ever experience the same feeling of fighting against time or of having to co-ordinate activities with an abstract passage of time, because their points of reference are mainly the activities themselves, which are generally of a leisurely character. Events follow a logical order, but they are not controlled by an abstract system, there being no autonomous points of reference to which activities have to conform with precision. Nuer are fortunate.

Also they have very limited means of reckoning the relative duration of periods of time intervening between events, since they have few, and not well-defined or systematized, units of time. Having no hours or other small units of time they cannot measure the periods which intervene between positions of the sun or daily activities. It is true that the year is divided into twelve lunar units, but Nuer do not reckon in them as fractions of a unit. They may be able to state in what month an event

805 occurred, but it is with great difficulty that they reckon the relation between events in abstract numerical symbols. They think much more easily in terms of activities and of successions of activities and in terms of social structure and of structural differences than in pure units of time.

We may conclude that the Nuer system of time-reckoning within the annual cycle and parts of the cycle is a series of conceptualizations of natural changes, and that the selection of points of reference is determined by the significance which these natural changes have for human activities.

II

In a sense all time is structural since it is a conceptualization of collateral, co-ordinated, or co-operative activities: the movements of a group. Otherwise time concepts of this kind could not exist, for they must have a like meaning for every one within a group. Milking-time and meal-times are approximately the same for all people who normally come into contact with one another, and the movement from villages to camps has approximately the same connotation everywhere in Nuerland, though it may have a special connotation for a particular group of persons. There is, however, a point at which we can say that time concepts cease to be determined by oecological factors and become more determined by structural interrelations, being no longer a reflection of man's dependence on nature, but a reflection of the interaction of social groups.

The year is the largest unit of oecological time. Nuer have words for the year before last, last year, this year, next year, and the year after next. Events which took place in the last few years are then the points of reference in time-reckoning, and these are different according to the group of persons who make use of them: joint family, village, tribal section, tribe, &c. One of the commonest ways of stating the year of an event is to mention where the people of the village made their dry season camps, or to refer to some evil that befell their cattle. A joint family may reckon time in the birth of calves of their herds. Weddings and other ceremonies, fights, and raids, may likewise give points of time, though in the absence of numerical dating no one can say without lengthy calculations how many years ago an event

PLATE XIII

Girl in millet garden (Dok)

[Face p. 104]

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer. FJ22

805 took place. Moreover, since time is to Nuer an order of events of outstanding significance to a group, each group has its own points of reference and time is consequently relative to structural space, locally considered. This is obvious when we examine the names given to years by different tribes, or sometimes by adjacent tribes, for these are floods, pestilences, famines, wars, &c., experienced by the tribe. In course of time the names of years are forgotten and all events beyond the limits of this crude historical reckoning fade into the dim vista of long long ago. Historical time, in this sense of a sequence of outstanding events of significance to a tribe, goes back much farther than the historical time of smaller groups, but fifty years is probably its limit, and the farther back from the present day the sparser and vaguer become its points of reference.

805 561 However, Nuer have another way of stating roughly when events took place; not in numbers of years, but by reference to the age-set system. Distance between events ceases to be reckoned in time concepts as we understand them and is reckoned in terms of structural distance, being the relation between groups of persons. It is therefore entirely relative to the social structure. Thus a Nuer may say that an event took place after the *Thut* age-set was born or in the initiation period of the *Boiloc* age-set, but no one can say how many years ago it happened. Time is here reckoned in sets. If a man of the *Dangunga* set tells one that an event occurred in the initiation period of the *Thut* set he is saying that it happened three sets before his set, or six sets ago. The age-set system is discussed in Chapter VI. Here it need only be said that we cannot accurately translate a reckoning in sets into a reckoning in years, but that we can roughly estimate a ten-year interval between the commencement of successive sets. There are six sets in existence, the names of the sets are not cyclic, and the order of extinct sets, all but the last, are soon forgotten, so that an age-set reckoning has seven units covering a period of rather under a century.

805 601 613 The structural system of time-reckoning is partly the selection of points of reference of significance to local groups which give these groups a common and distinctive history; partly the distance between specific sets in the age-set system; and partly

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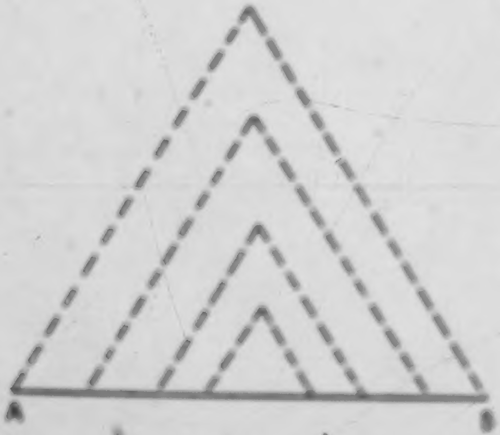
distances of a kinship and lineage order. Four generation-steps (*kath*) in the kinship system are linguistically differentiated relations, grandfather, father, son, and grandson, and within a small kinship group these relationships give a time-depth to members of the group and points of reference in a line of ascent by which their relationships are determined and explained. Any kinship relationship must have a point of reference on a line of ascent, namely a common ancestor, so that such a relationship always has a time connotation couched in structural terms. Beyond the range of the kinship system in this narrow sense the connotation is expressed in terms of the lineage system. As this subject is treated in Chapter V, we limit further discussion of it to an explanatory comment on the diagram above. The base line of the triangle represents a given group of agnates and the dotted lines represent their ghostly agnatic forebears, running from this base to a point in lineage structure, the common ancestor of every member of the group. The farther we extend the range of the group (the longer becomes the base line) the farther back in lineage structure is the common ancestor (the farther from the base line is the apex of the triangle). The four triangles are thus the time depths of four extensions of agnatic relationship on an existential plane and represent minimal, minor, major, and maximal lineages of a clan. Lineage time is thus the structural distance between groups of persons on the line *AB*. Structural time therefore



cannot be understood until structural distance is known, since 805
it is a reflection of it, and we must, therefore, ask the reader to 601
forgive a certain obscurity at this point and to reserve criticism 613
till we have had an opportunity of explaining more clearly what is meant by structural distance.

We have restricted our discussion to Nuer systems of time-reckoning 805
and have not considered the way in which an individual perceives time. The subject bristles with difficulties. Thus an individual may reckon the passage of time by reference to the physical appearance and status of other individuals and to changes in his own life-history, but such a method of reckoning time has no wide collective validity. We confess, however, that our observations on the matter have been slight and that a fuller analysis is beyond our powers. We have merely indicated those aspects of the problem which are directly related to the description of modes of livelihood which has gone before and to the description of political institutions which follows.

We have remarked that the movement of structural time is, 805
in a sense, an illusion, for the structure remains fairly constant 561
and the perception of time is no more than the movement of 613
persons, often as groups, through the structure. Thus age-sets succeed one another for ever, but there are never more than six in existence and the relative positions occupied by these six sets at any time are fixed structural points through which actual sets of persons pass in endless succession. Similarly, for reasons which we explain later, the Nuer system of lineages may be considered a fixed system, there being a constant number of steps between living persons and the founder of their clan and the lineages having a constant position relative to one another. However many generations succeed one another the depth and range of lineages does not increase unless there has been structural change. These statements are discussed more fully on pp. 198–200.

Beyond the limits of historical time we enter a plane of 805
tradition in which a certain element of historical fact may be
supposed to be incorporated in a complex of myth. Here the 173
points of reference are the structural ones w[illegible] indicated. At one end this plane merges into history; at the other end into myth. Time perspective is here not a true impression of actual distances like that created by our dating technique, but a

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reflection of relations between lineages, so that the traditional events recorded have to be placed at the points where the lineages concerned in them converge in their lines of ascent. The events have therefore a position in structure, but no exact position in historical time as we understand it. Beyond tradition lies the horizon of pure myth which is always seen in the same time perspective. One mythological event did not precede another, for myths explain customs of general social significance rather than the interrelations of particular segments and are, therefore, not structurally stratified. Explanations of any qualities of nature or of culture are drawn from this intellectual ambient which imposes limits on the Nuer world and makes it self-contained and entirely intelligible to Nuer in the relation of its parts. The world, peoples, and cultures all existed together from the same remote past.

It will have been noted that the Nuer time dimension is shallow. Valid history ends a century ago, and tradition, generously measured, takes us back only ten to twelve generations in lineage structure, and if we are right in supposing that lineage structure never grows, it follows that the distance between the beginning of the world and the present day remains unalterable. Time is thus not a continuum, but is a constant structural relationship between two points, the first and last persons in a line of agnatic descent. How shallow is Nuer time may be judged from the fact that the tree under which mankind came into being was still standing in Western Nuerland a few years ago!

Beyond the annual cycle time-reckoning is a conceptualization of the social structure, and the points of reference are a projection into the past of actual relations between groups of persons. It is less a means of co-ordinating events than of co-ordinating relationships, and is therefore mainly a looking-backwards, since relationships must be explained in terms of the past.

III

000 We have concluded that structural time is a reflection of structural distance. In the following sections we define further what we mean by structural distance, and make a formal,

000 preliminary, classification of Nuer territorial groups of a political kind. We have classified Nuer socio-temporal categories. We now classify their socio-spatial categories.

361 311 Were a man to fly over Nuerland he would see, as on Plate XVI, taken by the Royal Air Force in the dry season, white patches with what look like tiny fungoid growths on them. These are village sites with huts and byres. He would see that between such patches are stretches of brown and black, the brown being open grassland and the black being depressions which are swampy in the rains; and that the white patches are wider and more frequent in some parts than in others. We find Nuer give to these distributions certain values which compose their political structure.

It would be possible to measure the exact distance between hut and hut, village and village, tribal area and tribal area, and so forth, and the space covered by each. This would give us a statement of spatial measurements in bare physical terms. By itself it would have very limited significance. Oecological space is more than mere physical distance, though it is affected by it, for it is reckoned also by the character of the country intervening between local groups and its relation to the biological requirements of their members. A broad river divides two Nuer tribes more sharply than many miles of unoccupied bush. A distance which appears small in the dry season has a different appearance when the area it covers is flooded in the rains. A village community which has permanent water near at hand is in a very different position to one which has to travel in the dry season to obtain water, pasturage, and fishing. A tsetse belt creates an impassable barrier, giving wide oecological distance between the peoples it separates (p. 133), and presence or absence of cattle among neighbours of the Nuer likewise determines the oecological distance between them and the Nuer (pp. 132–3). Oecological distance, in this sense, is a relation between communities defined in terms of density and distribution, and with reference to water, vegetation, animal and insect life, and so on.

571 Structural distance is of a very different order, though it is always influenced and, in its political dimension, to a large extent determined by oecological conditions. By structural

571 distance is meant, as we have already indicated in the preceding section, the distance between groups of persons in a social system, expressed in terms of values. The nature of the country determines the distribution of villages and, therefore, the distance between them, but values limit and define the distribution in structural terms and give a different set of distances. A Nuer village may be equidistant from two other villages, but if one of these belongs to a different tribe and the other to the same tribe it may be said to be structurally more distant from the first than from the second. A Nuer tribe which is separated by forty miles from another Nuer tribe is structurally nearer to it than to a Dinka tribe from which it is separated by only twenty miles. When we leave territorial values and speak of lineages and age-sets, structural space is less determined by environmental conditions. One lineage is closer to another than to a third. One age-set is closer to another than to a third. The values attached to residence, kinship, lineage, sex, and age, differentiate groups of persons by segmentation, and the relative positions of the segments to one another gives a perspective that enables us to speak of the divisions between them as divisions of structural space. Having defined what is meant by structural space we may now proceed with a description of its political divisions.

IV

161 We cannot, owing to lack of adequate population statistics (see p. 117) and survey records, present a map showing the density of the different tribes, but a rough estimate is possible for the whole of Nuerland. Jackson says that the area to the east of the Nile amounts to some 26,000 square miles,[1] and recent censuses put its population at about 144,000, making about 5·5 to the square mile. The area to the west of the Nile is no less sparsely inhabited and possibly has a lower density. The total area of Nuerland is probably about 30,000 square miles and the total population round about 200,000. We may estimate that tribal density probably varies from about 4 to 10 to the square mile and that the average distribution for the whole of Nuerland is from about 5 to 6 to the square mile. Given the hydrological conditions of Nuerland and the present economy

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[1] Jackson, op. cit., p. 62.

of the people it may be doubted whether it could support a much 161
larger population than it does. This is particularly the case to the west of the Nile and it is likely, as Nuer themselves suggest, that their expansion eastwards was due to over-population. It is possible for there to be great local concentration in spite of low density for tribal areas, for the estimates of square mileage include vast stretches of land devoid of villages and camps, which is grazed over in the drought or merely traversed in seasonal movements. The degree of actual concentration, in this sense, varies from tribe to tribe and from tribal section to tribal section and from season to season.

I cannot figure such distributions more accurately than the 161
sketch-maps on pp. 56, 58, and 60, and I can only indicate them 361
verbally in the most general terms. As we have seen, the size of a village depends on the space available for building, grazing, and horticulture, and its homesteads are crowded or strung out accordingly, forming in most villages small clusters of huts and byres which we call hamlets, each being separated from its neighbours by gardens and unoccupied land on which calves, sheep, and goats graze. The population of a village—we can make no precise statement—may be anything from fifty to several hundred souls and may cover from a few hundred yards
to several miles. A village is usually well demarcated by the 361
contiguity of its residences and the stretches of bush, forest, and swamp which separate it from its neighbours. In my small experience one may, in most parts of Nuerland, traverse five to twenty miles from village to village. This is certainly the case in Western Nuerland. On the other hand, where the nature of the ground allows, villages may be much closer together and follow one another at short intervals over wide areas. Thus the greater part of the Lou are concentrated within thirty miles of Muot tot, the greater part of the Dok within ten miles of Ler, while the Lak, Thiang, and part of the Gaawar run fairly continuously along a wide ridge between the Nile and the Zeraf. Villages are always joined to their neighbours by paths created and maintained by their social interrelations. In every part of Nuerland there are also large areas, inundated in the rains, with no, or very few, villages. Those parts of the tribal areas left blank or shaded to show dry-season occupation in the sketch-

361 maps are mainly, and often entirely, without village sites, and in Western Nuerland the whole area between the Nile and the Bahr el Ghazal is very sparsely dotted with small villages; and the same is probably true of the country to the north of the Bahr el Ghazal.

I am compelled to describe the distribution of dry season camps as vaguely as the distribution of villages. Early camps may be found almost anywhere and often comprise only a few households; but the location of larger camps, formed later in the season, can be known in advance because there are only a few places which provide adequate water. Their size depends largely on the amount of water and grazing and their population varies from about a hundred to over a thousand souls. These concentrations are never tribal but comprise larger or smaller tribal sections. Round a lake a camp may be distributed in several sections with a few hundred yards between each; or one may then speak of contiguous camps. In any camp a few windscreens are generally adjacent to, almost touching, one another, and such a group may often at a glance be seen to be a distinct unit with its own section of the common kraal. Along the left bank of the Sobat and the right bank of the Baro one may observe from a steamer camps almost anywhere, separated from one another by only a few miles; but up streams, like the Nyanding and Pibor, in which only isolated pools of water remain, several miles separate camps. Some large camps in the interior of Lou country are separated by more than twenty miles of bush.

131
619 Great rivers flow through Nuerland and it is often these natural boundaries which indicate the lines of political cleavage. The Sobat separates the Gaajok tribe from the Lou tribe; the Pibor separates the Lou tribe from the Anuak people; the Zeraf separates the Thiang and Lak from the Dinka; the Ghazal separates the Karlual primary section of the Leek tribe from its other two primary sections; and so forth. Marshes and areas inundated in the rains likewise separate political groups. The Macar swamps divide the Eastern Gaajak from the Gaajok and Gaagwang; water-covered stretches divide, in the rains, the Rengyan from the Wot, Bor, &c.; and so on.

668 This account of distribution is unavoidably vague, but the main conditions and their significance can easily be summed up.

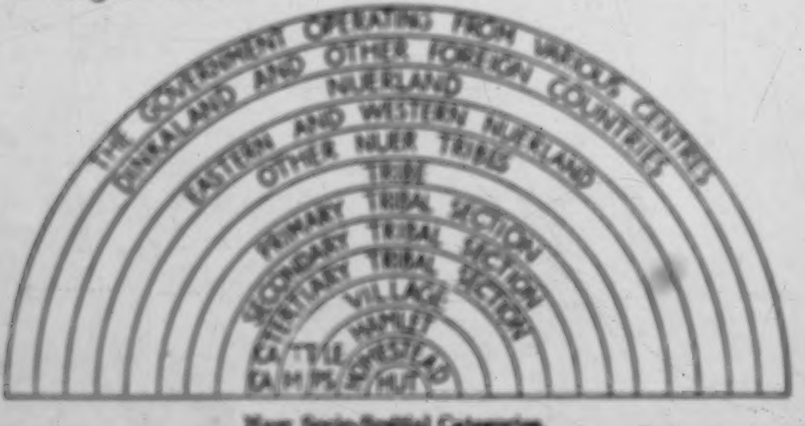
(1) Physical conditions which are responsible for scarcity of food 161
and a simple technology also cause low density and sparse distribution of settled areas. Lack of political cohesion and 361
development may be related to the density and distribution of the Nuer and, furthermore, in general their structural simplicity may be due to the same conditions. (2) The size of elevated stretches of land and the distances between them permit in some parts of Nuerland larger and closer concentration than in others. In the larger tribes a large population is often compelled by the nature of the country to build their homes within a short radius. (3) Where there is relatively great density of population in the rains there tends also to be greater need in the drought for early and far movement to new pastures. This need compels recognition of a common tribal value over large areas and enables us to understand better how it is that in spite of a necessary lack of political cohesion within the tribes they often have so large a population and occupy so large a territory.

V

We have noted that structural distance is the distance oc
between groups of persons in social structure and may be of different kinds. Those which concern us in our present account are political distance, lineage distance, and age-set distance. The political distance between villages of a tertiary tribal section is less than the distance between tertiary segments of a secondary tribal section, and that is less than the distance between secondary segments of a primary tribal section, and so forth. This forms the subject of Chapter IV. The lineage distance between segments of a minor lineage is less than the distance between minor segments of a major lineage, and that is less than the distance between major segments of a maximal lineage, and so forth. This forms the subject of Chapter V. The age-set distance between segments of an age-set is less than the distance between successive age-sets and that is less than the distance between age-sets which are not successive. This forms the subject of Chapter VI. As we wish to develop our argument and therefore to avoid analysis which does not allow the reader to refer back to statements

already made, we will give immediate consideration only to political distance and only to some characteristics of it.

631 Nuer give values to local distributions. It might be thought a simple matter to discover what these values are, but since they are embodied in words, one cannot understand their range of reference without considerable knowledge of the people's language and of the way they use it, for meanings vary according to the social situation and a word may refer to a variety of local groups. It is, nevertheless, possible to differentiate them and to make a crude formal classification of them, as we have done in the diagram below.


THE GOVERNMENT OPERATING FROM VARIOUS CENTRES
DINKALAND AND OTHER FOREIGN COUNTRIES
NUERLAND
EASTERN AND WESTERN NUERLAND
OTHER NUER TRIBES
TRIBE
PRIMARY TRIBAL SECTION
SECONDARY TRIBAL SECTION
TERTIARY TRIBAL SECTION
VILLAGE
HAMLET
HOMESTEAD
HUT
CATTLE
CAMP

Nuer Socio-Spatial Categories.

592
621 A single living hut (*dwil* or *ut*) is occupied by a wife and her children and, at times, by her husband. They constitute a simple residential family group. The homestead, consisting of a byre and huts, may contain a simple family group or a polygamous family and there are often one or two kinsmen living there as well. This group, which we call a household, is often referred to as the *gol*, a word which means 'hearth'. A hamlet with gardens and waste land around it is called *dhor* and each has its special name, often derived from some landmark or from the name of the senior kinsman living there. A hamlet is
621 generally occupied by close agnatic kinsmen, often brothers, and their households, and we call this group of persons a joint family. As these groups are not treated in our account we say no more about them. It must be remembered, however, that a

1; Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

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[911]

village is not an unsegmented unit but is a relation between a number of smaller units.

The village is a very distinct unit. It is sometimes referred to as *thur*, a ridge of high ground, but generally as *cieng*, a word which may be translated 'home', but which has such a variety of meanings that we shall devote a special section to it. A village comprises a community, linked by common residence and by a network of kinship and affinal ties, the members of which, as we have seen, form a common camp, co-operate in many activities, and eat in one another's byres and windscreens. A village is the smallest Nuer group which is not specifically of a kinship order and is the political unit of Nuerland. The people of a village have a feeling of strong solidarity against other villages and great affection for their site, and in spite of the wandering habits of Nuer, persons born and bred in a village have a nostalgia for it and are likely to return to it and make their home there, even if they have resided elsewhere for many years. Members of a village fight side by side and support each other in feuds. When the youths of a village go to dances they enter the dance in a war line (*dep*) singing their special war chant.

FIG. 11. Nuer and ebony spears

A cattle camp, which people of a village form in the drought and in which members of neighbouring villages participate, is known as *wec*. While this word has the meaning of 'camp' in contrast with *cieng*, 'village', both words are used in the same general sense of local community. Thus when it is said of a certain clan that they have no *wec* we are to understand that they nowhere in a tribal section or village form a dominant nucleus of the community and that, therefore, no local community takes its name from them. A large camp is called after the dominant lineage in it or after the village community who

62.1 occupy it, and small camps are sometimes named after an old person of importance who has erected his windscreen there. We have seen that the social composition of a camp varies at different times of the drought from the people of a hamlet to the people of a village, or of neighbouring villages, and that men sometimes camp with kinsmen living in camps other than those of their own villages. Consequently, while local communities of the rains tend to be also local communities in the drought their composition may be somewhat different. We again emphasize that not only are the people of a camp living in a more compact group than the people of a village, but also that in camp life there is more frequent contact between its members and greater co-ordination of their activities. The cattle are herded together, [592] milked at the same time, and so on. In a village each household herds its own cattle, if they are herded at all, and performs its domestic and kraal tasks independently and at different times. In the drought there is increasing concentration and greater uniformity in response to the greater severity of the season.

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We sometimes speak of a district to describe an aggregate of villages or camps which have easy and frequent intercommunication. The people of these villages take part in the same dances, intermarry, conduct feuds, go on joint raiding parties, share dry season camps or make camps in the same locality, and so on. This indefinite aggregate of contacts does not constitute a Nuer category or a political group, because the people do not see themselves, nor are seen by others, as a unique community, but 'district' is a term we employ to denote the sphere of a man's social contacts or of the social contacts of the people of a village and is, therefore, relative to the person or community spoken about. A district in this sense tends to correspond to a tertiary or a secondary tribal segment, according to the size of the tribe. In the smallest tribes a whole tribe is a man's district, and a district may even cut across tribal boundaries in that in a large tribe a border village may have more contacts with neighbouring villages of another tribe than with distant villages of its own tribe. The sphere of a man's social contacts may thus not entirely coincide with any structural division.

A number of adjacent villages, varying in number and total

extension according to the size of the tribe, are grouped into 634
small tribal sections and these into larger ones. In the larger 619
tribes it is convenient to distinguish between primary, secondary, and tertiary tribal sections. These sections, of whatever size, are, like a village, spoken of as *'cieng'*. Since the next chapter is devoted to these tribal segments no more is said about them here.

VI

The main Nuer tribes are shown on p. 8. The name 'Jagei' 619
inserted to the west of the Nile includes a number of small
tribes—Lang, Bor, Rengyan, and Wot. There are also some 161
small tribes—if they are rightly regarded as tribes, for little research was done in the area—in the vicinity of the Dok Nuer: Beegh, Jaalogh, (Gaan)Kwac, and Rol. A crude census, compiled from various Government sources, gives, in round figures, the more recent estimates for the larger tribes as follows:

Sobat Nuer: Gaajak, 42,000; Gaagwang, 7,000; Gaajok, 42,000; Lou, 33,000. *Zeraf Nuer*: Lak, 24,000; Thiang, 9,000; Gaawar, 20,000. Western Nuer: Bul, 17,000; Leek, 11,000; the three Western Jikany tribes, 11,000; the various Jagei tribes, 10,000; Dok, 12,000; Nuong, 9,000. These figures are probably more accurate for the Eastern than for the Western Nuer. Estimates show wide discrepancies and there has been much guesswork. On the basis of those recorded, the Sobat Nuer are 91,000, the Zeraf Nuer 53,000, and the Western Nuer 70,000, making a total of 214,000 for the whole of Nuerland. The population of only a few tribal segments is known. Among the Lou the Gun primary section number about 22,000 and the Mor primary section about 11,000; among the Gaawar the Radh primary section number about 10,000 and the Bar primary section about 10,000; and among the Lak tribe the Kwacbur primary section number about 12,000 and the Jenyang primary section number about 12,000.

It will be remarked that the tribes of Western Nuerland are 619
generally smaller than those on the Zeraf, and those on the Zeraf
smaller than those on the Sobat. Tribes tend to be larger the far- 161
ther eastwards one proceeds. Their territories also tend to be more 361
extensive. It may be suggested that the larger population of the Eastern Nuer tribes is due to the integrating effects of conquest and settlement and to the absorption of large numbers of Dinka which resulted therefrom, but we do not think that such explanations

619 161 361 account for their maintaining a semblance of tribal unity over such large areas in the absence of any central government. It is evident that the size of tribal populations is directly related to the amount of high land available for wet season occupation, and also to its disposition, for tribes like the Lou and Eastern Gaajok and Gaajak can have a concentration of homesteads and villages on wide stretches of elevated land, which is not possible for the smaller tribes of Western Nuerland, whose only building sites are small and sparsely
619 361 distributed ridges. But we hold that this fact in itself would not determine the lines of political cleavage, which can only be understood by taking into consideration also the relation between village sites and dry season water-supplies, pasturage, and fishing. We have noted earlier how tribal sections move from their villages to dry season pastures, each having spatial distinction in the rains which is maintained in the drought, but whereas in Western Nuerland there is always plenty of water, grazing, and fishing, generally not far from the villages, and it is possible for wet season village communities, isolated by inundated tracts in the rains, to maintain their isolation and independence in dry season camps, in the larger tribes of Eastern Nuerland, such as the Lou, drier conditions compel greater concentration and wider seasonal movements, with the result that village communities not only have a greater spatial, and we may say also moral, density in the drought than in the rains, but have to mix with one another and share water and pastures and fishing. Distinct villages are found side by side around a pool. Moreover, people of one section have to cross the territories of other sections to reach their camps, which may be situated near the villages of yet another section. Families and joint families often camp with kinsmen and affines who belong to other villages than their own, and it is a common practice to keep cattle in two or more parts of the country to avoid total loss from rinderpest, which is a dry season pestilence. It is understandable, therefore, that local communities which, though they are isolated in the rains, are forced in the drought into relations that necessitate some sense of community and the admission of certain common interests and obligations, should be contained in a common tribal structure. The severer the dry season conditions the greater the need for some measure of contact and therefore of forbearance and recognition of interdependence. The Zeraf tribes move less than the Sobat tribes and more than the Western Nuer tribes, the Gaawar moving more than the Thiang and Lak. We may again point out that on the whole where there is plenty of elevated country which permits concentration in the rains there is likewise the greater need for large concentrations in the dry

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season, since water, fishing, and pasture are found away from these elevated areas.

These facts seem to explain to some extent the political preponderance of pastoral peoples in East Africa. There may be wide dispersal of communities and low density of population, but there is seasonal contraction and wide interdependence. The variation in their circuits of transhumance also helps us to understand the variation in the size of Nuer tribes. It may be noted that, though the size and cohesion of tribes vary in different parts of Nuerland, nowhere do environmental conditions permit complete autonomy and exclusiveness of small village groups, such as we find among the Anuak, or such high density of population and such developed political institutions such as we find among the Shilluk.

Thus, on the one hand, environmental conditions and pastoral pursuits cause modes of distribution and concentration that provide the lines of political cleavage and are antagonistic to political cohesion and development; but, on the other hand, they necessitate extensive tribal areas within which there is a sense of community and a preparedness to co-operate.

Each tribe has a name which refers alike to its members and to their country (*rol*), e.g. Leek, Gaawar, Lou, Lak, &c. (see map on p. 8). Each has its particular territory and owns and defends its own building sites, grazing, water-supplies, and fishing-pools. Not only do large rivers or wide stretches of uninhabited country generally divide adjacent sections of contiguous tribes, but these sections tend to move in different directions in the drought. Conditions are doubtless changing in this respect, but we may cite as examples how the Gaawar tribe tend to move eastwards towards the Zeraf and not to come into contact with the Gun primary section of the Lou tribe, who cluster around their inland lakes or move to the Sobat and Pibor; how the Mor tribal section of the Lou move to the Nyanding and Upper Pibor in the direction of the Gaajok, who do not coalesce with them but move to the upper reaches of the Sobat and the lower reaches of the Pibor; and how the Western Jikany move towards the marshes of the Nile, while the Leek move north-west to the junction of the Bahr el Ghazal with its streams and lagoons. 610

Tribesmen have a common sentiment towards their country and hence towards their fellow tribesmen. This sentiment is evident in the pride with which they speak of their tribe as the

619 object of their allegiance, their joking disparagement of other tribes, and their indication of cultural variations in their own tribe as symbols of its singularity. 619 186 A man of one tribe sees the people of another tribe as an undifferentiated group to whom he has an undifferentiated pattern of behaviour, while he sees himself as a member of a segment of his own tribe. Thus when a Leek man says that So-and-so is a Nac (Rengyan) he at once defines his relationship to him. Tribal sentiment rests as much on opposition to other tribes as on common name, common territory, corporate action in warfare, and the common lineage structure of a dominant clan.

How strong is tribal sentiment may be gathered from the fact that sometimes men who intend to leave the tribe of their birth to settle permanently in another tribe take with them some earth of their old country and drink it in a solution of water, slowly adding to each dose a greater amount of soil from their new country, thus gently breaking mystical ties with the old and building up mystical ties with the new. I was told that were a man to fail to do this he might die of *nueer*, the sanction that punishes breach of certain ritual obligations.

619 721 A tribe is the largest group the members of which consider it their duty to combine for raiding and for defensive action. The younger men of the tribe went, till recently, on joint expeditions against the Dinka and waged war against other Nuer tribes. Wars between tribes were less frequent than attacks on the Dinka, but there are many examples in recent Nuer history of border disputes among tribes and even of one tribe raiding another for cattle, and such fighting is traditional among the Nuer. The Leek tribe raided the Jikany and Jagei tribes, and a Leek tribesman told me, 'The cattle with which my father married were Gee (Jagei) cattle.' Poncet remarks: 'Les Elliab (Dok) se battent avec les Egnan (Nuong) du sud et les Relan (Rengyan) du nord; les Ror de l'intérieur avec ces derniers et les Bior (Bor) de Gazal (Ghazal river). Toutes leurs querelles viennent des pâturages qu'ils se disputent, ce qui n'empêche pas qu'ils voyagent les uns chez les autres sans aucun danger, à moins cependant qu'on n'ait un parent à venger.'[1] In theory a tribe was regarded as a military unit, and if two sections of different tribes

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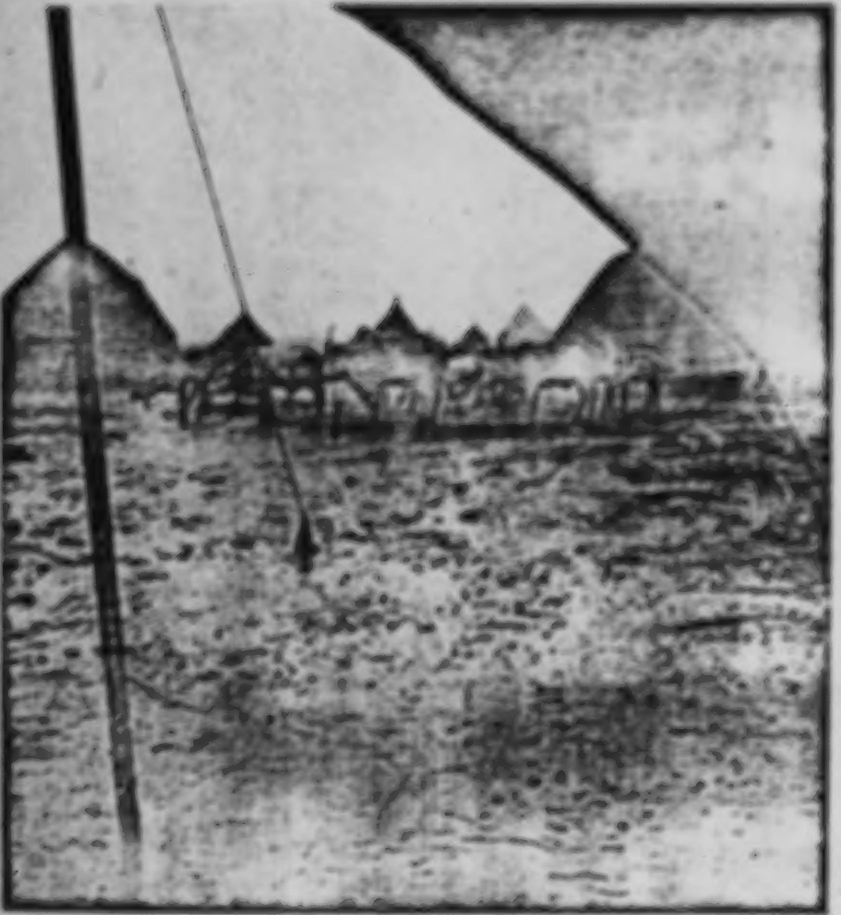
[1] Op. cit., p. 39.

PLATE XIV



August shower (Lou)

[Face p. 120]

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were engaged in hostilities each could rely on the support of the other sections of the same tribe; but, in practice, they would often only join in if the other side was receiving assistance from neighbouring sections. When a tribe united for warfare there was a truce to disputes within its borders.

Tribes, especially the smaller ones, often united to raid foreigners. The Leek united with the Jagei and Western Jikany, and the Lou with the Gaawar to attack the Dinka; the Lou with the Eastern Jikany tribes to attack the Anuak; and so on. These military alliances between tribes, often under the aegis of a Sky-god, speaking through his prophet (p. 188), were of short duration, there was no moral obligation to form them, and, though action was concerted, each tribe fought separately under its own leaders and lived in separate camps in enemy country.

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Fighting between Nuer of different tribes was of a different character from fighting between Nuer and Dinka. Inter-tribal fighting was considered fiercer and more perilous, but it was subject to certain conventions: women and children were not molested, huts and byres were not destroyed, and captives were not taken. Also, other Nuer were not considered natural prey, as were the Dinka.

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Another defining characteristic of a tribe is that within it there is *cut*, blood-wealth paid in compensation for homicide, and Nuer explain the tribal value in terms of it. Thus Lou tribesmen say that among themselves there is blood-wealth, but not between themselves and the Gaajok or the Gaawar; and this is the invariable definition of tribal allegiance in every part of Nuerland. Between tribesmen there is also *ruok*, compensation for torts other than homicide, though the obligation to pay it is less generally stressed or carried out, while between one tribe and another no such obligation is acknowledged. We may therefore say that there is law, in the limited and relative sense defined in Chapter IV, between tribesmen, but no law between tribes. If a man commits an offence against a fellow tribesman he places himself and his kin in a legal position towards this man and his kin, and the hostile relations that ensue can be broken down by payment of cattle. If a man commits the same act against a man of another tribe no breach of law is recognized, no obligation is felt to settle the dispute, and there is no

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machinery to conclude it. Local communities have been classed as tribes or tribal segments by whether they acknowledge the obligation to pay blood-wealth or not. Thus the Gun and the Mor are classed as primary segments of the Lou tribe, while the Eastern Gaajok, Gaajak, and Gaagwang have been classed as three tribes and not as three primary segments of a single Jikany tribe.

It may have happened that border cases between different tribes were sometimes settled by payment of compensation, but I have no record of such settlements other than the doubtful statement given on p. 189, and were they to have taken place it would in no way invalidate our definition of tribal structure. However, it must be understood that we are defining a tribe in the most formal way and that, as we shall show later, the acknowledgement of legal responsibility within a tribe does not mean that, in fact, it is easy to obtain compensation for a tort. There is little solidarity within a tribe and feuds are frequent and of long duration. Indeed, the feud is a characteristic institution of tribal organization.

A tribe has been defined by (1) a common and distinct name; (2) a common sentiment; (3) a common and distinct territory; (4) a moral obligation to unite in war; and (5) a moral obligation to settle feuds and other disputes by arbitration. To these five points can be added three further characteristics, which are discussed later: (6) a tribe is a segmented structure and there is opposition between its segments; (7) within each tribe there is a dominant clan and the relation between the lineage structure of this clan and the territorial system of the tribe is of great structural importance; (8) a tribe is a unit in a system of tribes; and (9) age-sets are organized tribally.

VII

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Adjacent tribes are opposed to one another and fight one another. They sometimes combine against Dinka, but such combinations are loose and temporary federations for a specific end and do not correspond to any clear political value. Occasionally a tribe will allow a section of another to camp in its territory and there may be more contacts between persons of border villages or camps of different tribes than between widely sepa-

rated communities of the same tribe. The first may have more social contacts; the second be structurally nearer. But between Nuer tribes there is no common organization or central administration and hence no political unity that we can refer to as national. Nevertheless, adjacent tribes, and the Dinka who face them, form political systems, since the internal organization of each tribe can only be fully understood in terms of their mutual opposition, and their common opposition to the Dinka who border them. 619

Beyond these systems of direct political relations the whole Nuer people see themselves as a unique community and their culture as a unique culture. Opposition to their neighbours gives them a consciousness of kind and a strong sentiment of exclusiveness. A Nuer is known as such by his culture, which is very homogeneous, especially by his language, by the absence of his lower incisors, and, if he is a man, by six cuts on his brow. All Nuer live in a continuous stretch of country. There are no isolated sections. However, their feeling of community goes deeper than recognition of cultural identity. Between Nuer, wherever they hail from, and though they be strangers to one another, friendly relations are at once established when they meet outside their country, for a Nuer is never a foreigner to another as he is to a Dinka or a Shilluk. Their feeling of superiority and the contempt they show for all foreigners and their readiness to fight them are a common bond of communion, and their common tongue and values permit ready intercommunication. 186

Nuer are well aware of the different divisions of their country, even if they have never visited them, and they all look upon the area to the west of the Nile as their common homeland, to the occupants of which they still have distant kinship ties. People also journey to visit kinsmen in other tribes and often settle for long periods far from their homes, sometimes in different tribes, in which, if they stay there long enough, they become permanently incorporated. Constant social intercourse flows across the borders of adjacent tribes and unites their members, especially members of border communities, by many strands of kinship and affinity. If a man changes his tribe he can at once fit himself into the age-set system of the tribe of his adoption, and there is 484 619

484 619 314] often co-ordination of sets between adjacent tribes. A single clan is sometimes dominant in more than one tribal area, dominant clans are linked in a general clan system, and the principal clans are found in every part of Nuerland. We have noted how in the days of ivory trading Gaajak tribesmen journeyed through the territories of other tribes as far as the Zeraf.

619 571 The limits of the tribe are therefore not the limits of social intercourse, and there are many ties between persons of one tribe and persons of another tribe. Through association with the clan system and by proximity the people of one tribe may consider themselves nearer to a second than to a third. Thus the three Eastern Jikany tribes feel a vague unity in relation to the Lou, and so do the Bor and Rengyan in relation to the Leek. But, also, individuals, and through individuals kinship groups and even a village, have a circuit of social relationships that cut across tribal divisions, so that a traveller who crosses the border of his tribe can always establish some links with individuals of the tribe he visits in virtue of which he will receive hospitality and protection. If he is wronged, his host, and not he, is involved in legal action. However, there is a kind of international law, in the recognition of conventions in certain matters, beyond political boundaries and the limits of formal law. [572] Thus, though it is considered more risky to marry outside the tribe than within it, since divorce may prove more detrimental in that the return of bride-wealth is less certain, the rules of marriage are acknowledged on both sides and it would be considered improper to take advantage of political cleavage to break them. Tribes are thus politically exclusive groups, but they are not coterminous with an individual's sphere of social relations, though this sphere tends to follow the lines of political cleavage, in the same way as a man's district tends to be equated to his tribal segment. The relation between political structure and general social relations is discussed in the chapters that follow. Here we may note that it is desirable to distinguish between (1) political distance in the sense of structural distance between segments of a tribe, the largest political unit, and between tribes in a system of political relations; (2) general structural distance in the sense of non-political distance between various social groups in the Nuer-speaking community—non-political struc-

tural relations are strongest between adjacent tribes, but a 619
common social structure embraces the whole of Nuerland; and 571
(3) the social sphere of an individual, being his circuit of social
contacts of one kind or another with other Nuer.

VIII

The political structure of the Nuer can only be understood 619
in relation to their neighbours, with whom they form a single
political system. Contiguous Dinka and Nuer tribes are segments 648
within a common structure as much as are segments of
the same Nuer tribe. Their social relationship is one of hostility
and its expression is in warfare.

The Dinka people are the immemorial enemies of the Nuer. 648
They are alike in their oecologies, cultures, and social systems, so that individuals belonging to the one people are easily assimilated to the other; and when the balanced opposition between a Nuer political segment and a Dinka political segment changes into a relationship in which the Nuer segment becomes entirely dominant, fission and not a class structure results.

As far as history and tradition go back, and in the vistas of
myth beyond their farthest reach, there has been enmity between
the two peoples. Almost always the Nuer have been the [773]
aggressors, and raiding of the Dinka is conceived by them to be a normal state of affairs and a duty, for they have a myth, like that of Esau and Jacob, which explains it and justifies it. Nuer and Dinka are represented in this myth as two sons of God who promised his old cow to Dinka and its young calf to Nuer. Dinka came by night to God's byre and, imitating the voice of Nuer, obtained the calf. When God found that he had been tricked he was angry and charged Nuer to avenge the injury by raiding Dinka's cattle to the end of time. This story, familiar to every Nuer, is not only a reflection of the political relations between the two peoples but is also a commentary on their characters. Nuer raid for cattle and seize them openly and by force of arms. Dinka steal them or take them by treachery. All Nuer regard them—and rightly so—as thieves, and even the Dinka seem to admit the reproach, if we attribute correct significance to the statement made to Mr. K. C. P. Struvé in 1907 by the Dinka keeper of the shrine of Deng dit at Luang Deng.

644 After recounting the myth of the cow and calf, he added, 'And to this day the Dinka has always lived by robbery, and the Nuer by war.'[7]

721 Fighting, like cattle husbandry, is one of the chief activities and dominant interests of all Nuer men, and raiding Dinka for cattle is one of their principal pastimes. Indeed *jaang*, Dinka, is sometimes used to refer to any tribe whom the Nuer habitually raid and from whom they take captives. Boys look forward to the day when they will be able to accompany their elders on these raids against the Dinka, and as soon as youths have been initiated into manhood they begin to plan an attack to enrich themselves and to establish their reputation as warriors. Every Nuer tribe raided Dinka at least every two or three years, and some part of Dinkaland must have been raided annually. Nuer have a proper contempt for Dinka and are derisive of their fighting qualities, saying that they show as little skill as courage. *Kur jaang*, fighting with Dinka, is considered so trifling a test of valour that it is not thought necessary to bear shields on a raid or to pay any regard to adverse odds, and is contrasted with the dangers of *kur Nath*, fighting between Nuer themselves. These boasts are justified both in the unflinching bravery of the Nuer and by their military success.

727 The earliest travellers record that Nuer held both banks of the Nile, but it is probable that the entire Zeraf Island was at one time occupied by Dinka and it is certain that the whole of the country from the Zeraf to the Pibor and, to the north of the Sobat, from the confines of Shillukland to the Ethiopian scarp was, with the exception of riverain settlements of Anuak, still in their hands as late as the middle of last century, when it was seized by the Nuer in two lines of expansion, to the north of the Sobat and to the south of it. This is known from the statements of both Nuer and Dinka, the evidence of genealogies and age-sets, and the records of travellers, who frequently refer to the struggle between the two peoples, the dominant position of the Nuer among their neighbours, the awe they inspired in them, and their bravery and chivalry.[8] The conquest, which seems to have resulted in absorp-

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[7] *Sudan Intelligence Report*, no. 152, 1907.

[8] Werne, op. cit., p. 163; Abd-el-Hamid, op. cit., pp. 82–3; Philippe Terranuova D'Antonio, 'Relation d'un voyage au Fleuve Blanc', *Nouvelles annales des voyages*, Paris, 1859. Lejean, op. cit., p. 232; Poncet, op. cit., pp. 18, 26, 39, 41–2, and 44; Petherick, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 6; Heuglin, *Reise in das Gebiet*

tion and miscegenation rather than extermination, was so rapid 727
and successful that the whole of this vast area is to-day occupied
by Nuer, except for a few pockets of Dinka on the Sobat, Filus, and
Atar. Apart from these independent units there are many local
communities in Eastern Nuerland of Nuer who acknowledge that
they are of Dinka descent, and small lineages of Dinka origin are
found in every village and camp. Some Dinka tribes took refuge
with compatriots to the south, where the Gaawar and Lou continued
to raid them. The Western Nuer likewise persistently
raided all the Dinka tribes that border them, particularly those to
the south and west, obtained a moral ascendency over them, and
compelled them to withdraw farther and farther from their
boundaries. To the west of the Nile, as to the east, Dinka captives
were assimilated, and there are many small lineages of Dinka
descent in every tribe, and these are often preponderant in local
communities. Of all the Dinka only the Ngok, to the south of the 648
Sobat, were left in peace, probably on account of their poverty of
stock and grazing, though their immunity has a mythological
sanction. It seems also that the Atwot were not considered such
legitimate prey as the Dinka on account of their Nuer origin, and
it is probable that they were seldom molested as they are remotely
situated.

The favourite season for raiding Dinka was at the end of the 721
rains, though they were also invaded at their commencement.
Lou tribesmen told me that when they raided Dinka to the southwest
they used to sleep the first night near the villages of the Wot
tribe and the second night in the bush. They took no food with
them and ate only what fish they might hastily spear on the way,
travelling with all speed throughout the day and part of the night.
On the third day they attacked the Dinka villages or camps at
dawn. The Dinka seldom put up any resistance, but loosened
their cattle and tried to drive them away. No one seized cattle
till the enemy had been dispersed. Then each took what prizes he
could, often not troubling to tether his captures but slashing their
rumps in sign of ownership. Afterwards the beasts were tied up

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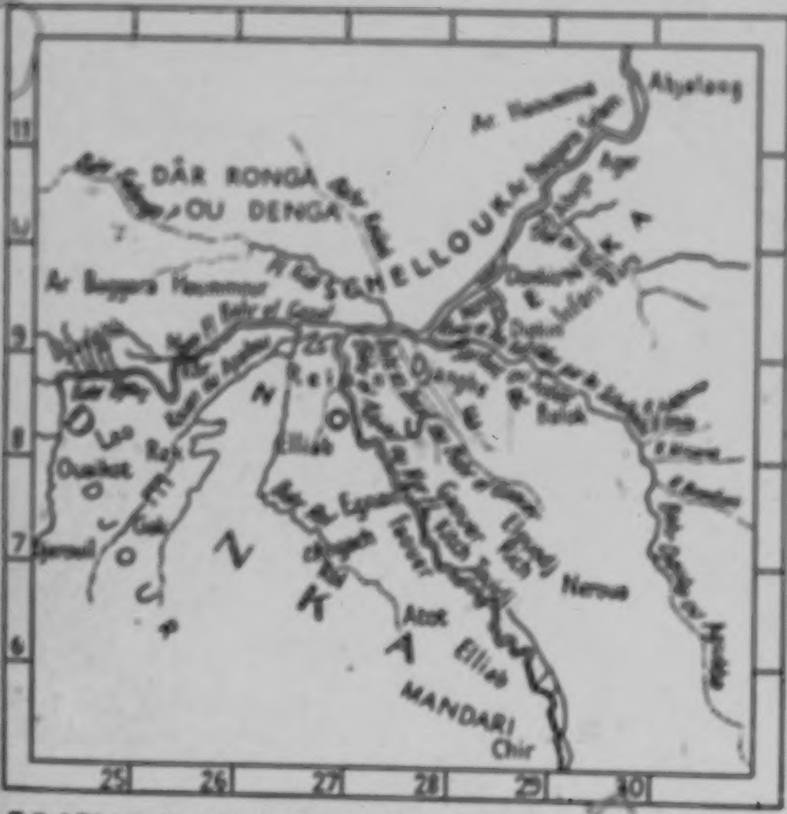
des Weissen Nil und seiner westlichen Zuflüsse in den Jahren 1862–1864, 1869, p. 104. Georg Schweinfurth, *The Heart of Africa* (English translation), 1873, vol. i, pp. 118–19; Gaetano Casati, *Ten Years in Equatoria and the Return with Emin Pasha* (English translation), 1891, vol. i, p. 39; Romolo Gessi Pasha, *Seven Years in the Soudan* (English translation), 1892, p. 57. The maps intended by travellers to show the positions of the peoples of this area are rather vague and are not in entire agreement. The reader may consult those in Marno, op. cit., Poncet, op. cit., Heuglin, op. cit., the map compiled by Lejean from information supplied by the Poncet brothers in *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie* (Paris), 1860; the maps prepared by V. A. Malte-Brun in *Nouvelles annales des voyages*, 1855 and 1863, and others of this period.

721 in the enemy's kraal, the oxen being mainly slaughtered for food. If the Dinka gathered reinforcements and returned to fight they were met in full battle formation. Nuer fight in three divisions with two or three hundred yards between each, and if one division is engaged the others advance or retreat parallel to it according to the fortunes of war. A party of scouts are in advance of the central division and they charge up to the enemy, hurl their spears at them, and fall back on the main body.

The raiders spent several weeks in Dinkaland and sometimes remained there throughout the dry season, living on the milk and flesh of captured cattle, on pillaged grain, and on fish. Using a captured kraal as a base they extended their raid against distant camps. 721 167 Nuer migrations seem to have been conducted on these lines, the raiders settling permanently in Dinka country and by systematic raiding compelling the inhabitants to withdraw farther and farther from the points of occupation. In the following season a new series of raids was initiated and the process was repeated till the Dinka were compelled to seek refuge with their kinsfolk of another tribe and leave their country to its invaders. If settlement was not contemplated, however, the raiders returned home when they considered that they had sufficient booty.

727 Before camp was broken up there took place a custom highly indicative of Nuer sense of equality and justice. It was recognized that the whole force was jointly responsible for the success of the raid and there was therefore a redistribution of the booty. [792] The prophet whose revelations sanctioned the raid first made a round of the camp and selected from each household a cow for the divine spirit of whom he was the mouthpiece. By this time a household possessed some fifty head, so that it was no hardship to be asked to give one to the spirit. There then took place a general scramble and everybody rushed amid the herd to earmark beasts for himself. A man who could first seize an animal, tether it, and cut its ear had absolute claim to it. The man who originally captured a cow had the advantage that it was tethered near his windscreen, but if he and members of his household had an undue share of the booty they could not earmark all the beasts before they were seized by others. As might be supposed, men frequently sustained injury in these scrambles, for if two men seized the same cow they fought with clubs for possession of it. One must not use the spear on these occasions. Men of neighbouring camps took part in one another's redistributions and there must have been great confusion. Captives, women of marriageable age, boys, and girls, were not redistributed but belonged to their original captor. Older women and babies were clubbed and, when the raid was on a village, their

bodies were thrown on the flaming byres and huts. Captives were placed in the centre of the camp, the women being sometimes bound at night to render them more secure. Sexual intercourse is taboo on a raid. Nor may Nuer eat with a captive. A boy captive may not even draw water for them to drink. Only when 727 [834] [114]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Tribal Distribution about 1860 (after V. A. Malte-Brun, *Nouvelles annales des voyages*, 1863).

an ox has been sacrificed in honour of the ghosts, after the return home, and they have been informed that strangers have entered their homesteads, may Nuer have sexual relations with captives or eat with them.

In the following section we describe other foreign contacts, but till European conquest the only foreign relations which may be said to have been expressed in constant warfare were those with the various Dinka tribes which border Nuerland. 648

648 We have not enumerated them, for their names are irrelevant. The fighting between the two peoples has been incessant from time immemorial and seems to have reached a state of equilibrium before European conquest upset it. (Malte-Brun's map compared with modern maps suggests that tribal positions have not greatly altered since 1860.) In the earlier part of the historic period, from about 1840 to near the end of the century, Nuer appear to have been expanding in search of new grazing, but continued raiding for cattle, an aggressive action which we attribute to the structural relations between the two peoples, but which was, no doubt, intensified by rinderpest.

Though Dinka relations with Nuer are extremely hostile and war between them may be called an established institution, they have, nevertheless, united occasionally to make war against the Egyptian Government and there have sometimes been joint social gatherings. In times of famine Dinka have often come to reside in Nuerland and have been readily accepted and incorporated into Nuer tribes. In times of peace, also, Dinka visited their relations who had been captured or who had settled in Nuerland, and, as remarked earlier, there seems in parts to have been some trade between the two peoples. The strands of social relationships of a general kind, which are often numerous across the boundaries of adjacent Nuer tribes and which stretch across Nuerland, are thus prolonged weakly beyond the limits of Nuerland in occasional and hazardous contacts with foreigners.

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All Dinka come into the category of *Jaang*, and Nuer feel that category to be nearer to themselves than other categories of foreigners. These foreign peoples, with all of whom the Nuer have reached a state of balanced hostility, an equilibrium of opposition, expressed occasionally in fighting, are, with the exception of the Beir, generally classed as *Bar*, cattleless people or people possessing very few cattle. A further category are the *Jur*, cattleless people whom the Nuer regard as lying on the periphery of their world, such as the Bongo-Mittu group of peoples, the Azande, the Arabs, and ourselves. However, they have separate names for most of these peoples.

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We have remarked that Nuer feel Dinka to be nearer to themselves than other foreigners, and in this connexion we draw

attention to the fact that Nuer show greater hostility towards, and more persistently attack, the Dinka, who are in every respect most akin to themselves, than any other foreign people. This is undoubtedly due, in some degree, to the ease with which they can pillage the vast Dinka herds. It may also, in part, be attributed to the fact that of all neighbouring areas Dinkaland alone opposes no serious oecological handicaps to a pastoral people. But it may be suggested further that the kind of warfare that exists between Nuer and Dinka, taking into consideration also the assimilation of captives and the intermittent social relations between the two peoples between raids, would seem to require recognition of cultural affinity and of like values. War between Dinka and Nuer is not merely a clash of interests, but is also a structural relationship between the two peoples, and such a relationship requires a certain acknowledgement on both sides that each to some extent partakes of the feelings and habits of the other. We are led by this reflection to note that political relations are profoundly influenced by the degree of cultural differentiation that exists between the Nuer and their neighbours. The nearer people are to the Nuer in mode of livelihood, language, and customs, the more intimately the Nuer regard them, the more easily they enter into relations of hostility with them, and the more easily they fuse with them. Cultural differentiation is strongly influenced by oecological divergences, particularly by the degree to which neighbouring peoples are pastoral, which depends on their soils, water-supplies, insect life, and so forth. But it is also to a considerable extent independent of oecological circumstances, being autonomous and historical. The cultural similarity of Dinka and Nuer may be held largely to determine their structural relations; as, also, the relations between the Nuer and other peoples are largely determined by their increasing cultural dissimilarity. The cultural cleavage is least between Nuer and Dinka; it widens between Nuer and the Shilluk-speaking peoples; and is broadest between the Nuer and such folk as the Koma, Burun, and Bongo-Mittu peoples. UN 171

Nuer make war against a people who have a culture like their own rather than among themselves or against peoples with cultures very different from their own. The relations between 660

(726) social structure and culture are obscure, but it may well be that had the Nuer not been able to expand at the expense of the Dinka, and to raid them, they would have been more antagonistic to people of their own breed and the structural changes which would have resulted would have led to greater cultural heterogeneity in Nuerland than at present exists. This may be an idle speculation, but we can at least say that the vicinity of a people like themselves who possess rich herds that can be plundered may be supposed to have had the effect of directing the aggressive impulses of Nuer away from their fellow-countrymen. The predatory tendencies which Nuer share with other nomads, find an easy outlet against the Dinka, and this may account not only for the few wars between Nuer tribes but also, in consequence, be one of the explanations of the remarkable size of many Nuer tribes, for they could not maintain what unity they have were their sections raiding one another with the persistence with which they attack the Dinka.

IX

628 Nuer had little contact with the Shilluk, a buffer of Dinka dividing them in most places, and where they have a common border, warfare seems to have been restricted to incidents involving only frontier camps. The powerful Shilluk kingdom, well organised and comprising over a hundred thousand souls, could not have been raided with the same impunity as the Dinka tribes, but the characteristic reason Nuer give for not attacking them is otherwise: 'They have no cattle. The Nuer only raid people who possess cattle. If they had cattle we would raid them and take their cattle, for they do not know how to fight as we fight.' There is no actual or mythological enmity between the two peoples.

The Anuak, who also belong to the Shilluk-Luo group, border the Nuer to the south-east. Though they are almost entirely horticultural to-day, they possessed herds in the past and in Nuer opinion their country has better grazing than Shillukland. It was overrun by the Nuer over half a century ago as far as the foothills of the Ethiopian scarp, but was quickly abandoned, probably because of tsetse, for the Anuak put up little resistance. Nuer continued to raid them up to thirty years ago, when they obtained rifles from Abyssinia and were better able to resist and even to take the offensive. In spite of two reverses they finally succeeded in penetrating Lou country, where they inflicted heavy casualties and captured many children and cattle, a feat which brought the {64} Government down the Pibor, thereby closing hostilities. Many evidences show that at one time the Anuak extended far westward of their present distribution and were displaced from these sites, or assimilated, by the Nuer.

The other peoples with whom Nuer come into contact may be mentioned very briefly as their interrelations have little political importance. Another south-eastern neighbour is the Beir (Murle) people. As far as I am aware the Nuer did not raid them often and those few who know something of them respect them as devoted herdsmen. To the north-east of Nuerland the Gaajak have for several decades had relations with the Galla of Ethiopia. These appear to have been peaceful and there was a certain amount of trade between the two peoples. Absence of [164] friction may be attributed largely to the corridor of death that divides them, for when the Galla descend from their plateau they quickly succumb to malaria while any attempt on the part of the Nuer to move eastwards is defeated by the tsetse belt that runs along the foot-hills. The Gaajak raided the Burun and Koma (both often referred to vaguely as 'Burun') for captives, and they were too small in numbers and too unorganized to resist or retaliate. To the north-west the Jikany, Leek, and Bul tribes occasionally raided the Arabs and the communities of the Nuba Mountains; and, to judge from a statement by Jules Poncet, the trouble over water and grazing in the dry season that occurs to-day between Nuer and Arabs has long occurred.[1]

The Arab slavers and ivory traders, who caused so much misery and destruction among the peoples of the Southern Sudan after the conquest of the Northern Sudan by Muhammad Ali in 1821, very little inconvenienced the Nuer. They sometimes pillaged riverside villages, but I know of no record of their having penetrated far inland, and it was only the more accessible sections of the Zeraf River tribes that appear to have suffered to any extent from their depredations. I do not believe that anywhere were the Nuer deeply affected by Arab contact.[2] The Egyptian Government and, later, the Mahdist Government, which were supposed to be in control of the Sudan from 1821 to the end of the century, in no way administered the Nuer or exercised control over them from the riverside posts they established on the fringes of their country.

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[1] Poncet, op. cit., p. 25.

[2] I find myself unable to accept Casati's statement of the position (op. cit., vol. i, p. 38), but consider that greater reliance should be placed on the opinion of other authorities. See Romolo Gessi's letter to the Editor of *Esploratore* in 1880 (op. cit., p. xx), and Lejean's report from Khartoum in 1860 (op. cit., p. 215).

648 The Nuer sometimes raided these posts and were sometimes raided from them,[1] but on the whole it may be said that they pursued their lives in disregard of them.

This disregard continued after the reconquest of the Sudan by Anglo-Egyptian forces and the establishment of the new administration. The Nuer were the last important people to be brought under control and the administration of their country cannot be said to have been very effective till 1928, before which year government consisted of occasional patrols which only succeeded in alienating them further. The nature of the country rendered communications difficult and prevented the establishment of posts in Nuerland itself, and the Nuer showed no desire to make contact with those on its periphery. Little control was exercised and it was impossible to enforce decisions.[2] A further difficulty was the absence of Nuer who had travelled in foreign parts and spoke Arabic, for their place was usually taken, as interpreters and in other capacities, by Dinka and Anuak, who were distrusted, and rightly so, by the Nuer against whom they lodged every kind of complaint.

648
181 The truculence and aloofness displayed by the Nuer is conformable to their culture, their social organization, and their character. The self-sufficiency and simplicity of their culture and the fixation of their interests on their herds explain why they neither wanted nor were willing to accept European innovations and why they rejected peace from which they had everything to lose. Their political structure depended for its form and persistence on balanced antagonisms that could only be expressed in warfare against their neighbours if the structure were to be maintained. Recognition of fighting as a cardinal value, pride in past achievements, and a deep sense of their common equality and their superiority to other peoples, made it impossible for them to accept willingly domination, which they had hitherto never experienced. Had more been known about them a different policy might have been instituted earlier and with less prejudice.[3]

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[1] See, for example, Casati, op. cit., p. 221.

[2] For an account of conditions at this time see the *Sudan Intelligence Reports*, especially those by Kaimakam F. J. Maxse (no. 61, 1899), Capt. H. H. Wilson (no. 128, 1905), and O'Sullivan Bey (no. 187, 1910).

[3] For abusive references to the Nuer see Sir Samuel Baker, *The Albert N'Yanza*, 1913 (first published in 1866), pp. 39–42; Capt. H. H. Austin, *Among Swamps and Giants in Equatorial Africa*, 1902, p. 15; Count Gleichen, op. cit., 1905, vol. i, p. 133; C. W. L. Bulpett, *A Picnic Party in Wildest Africa*, 1907, pp. 22–3 and 35; Bimbashi Coningham, *Sudan Intelligence Report*, no. 192, 1910; H. Lincoln Tangye, *In the Torrid Sudan*, 1910, p. 222; E. S. Stevens, *My Sudan Year*, 1912, pp. 215 and 256–7; H. C. Jackson, op. cit., p. 60; *The Story of Fergie Bey. Told by himself and some of his Friends*, 1930, p. 113; and J. G. Millais, *Far away up the Nile*, 1924, pp. 174–5.

CONTINUED
ON
NEXT FICHE

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

PLATE XV

351

a. Windscreen (Lou)

312

b. A well in the bed of the Nyanding (Lou)

[Face p. 134]

648 In 1920 large-scale military operations, including bombing and machine-gunning of camps, were conducted against the Eastern Jikany and caused much loss of life and destruction of property. There were further patrols from time to time, but the Nuer remained unsubdued. In 1927 the Nuong tribe killed their District Commissioner, while at the same time the Lou openly defied the Government and the Gaawar attacked Duk Faiyuil Police Post. From 1928 to 1930 prolonged operations were conducted against the whole of the disturbed area and marked the end of serious fighting between the Nuer and the Government. Conquest was a severe blow to the Nuer, who had for so long raided their neighbours with impunity and whose country had generally remained intact.

X

000 In our account of Nuer time-reckoning we noted that in one department of time their system of reckoning is, in a broad sense, a conceptualization, in terms of activities, or of physical changes that provide convenient points of reference for activities, of those phases of the oecological rhythm which have peculiar significance for them. We further noted that in another department of time it is a conceptualization of structural relations, time units being co-ordinate with units of structural space. We have given a brief description of these units of structural space in its political, or territorial, dimension and have drawn attention to the influence of oecology on distribution and hence on the values given to the distribution, the interrelation between which is the political system. This system is not, however, as simple as we have presented it, for values are not simple, and we now attempt to face some of the difficulties we have so far neglected. We start this attempt by asking what it is the Nuer mean when they speak of their *cieng*.

196
621 Values are embodied in words through which they influence behaviour. When a Nuer speaks of his *cieng*, his *dhor*, his *gol*, &c., he is conceptualizing his feelings of structural distance, identifying himself with a local community, and, by so doing, cutting himself off from other communities of the same kind. An examination of the word *cieng* will teach us one of the most fundamental characteristics of Nuer local groups and, indeed, of all social groups: their structural relativity.

621 196 What does a Nuer mean when he says, 'I am a man of such-and-such a *cieng*'? *Cieng* means 'home', but its precise significance varies with the situation in which it is spoken. If one meets an Englishman in Germany and asks him where his home is, he may reply that it is England. If one meets the same man in London and asks him the same question he will tell one that his home is in Oxfordshire, whereas if one meets him in that county he will tell one the name of the town or village in which he lives. If questioned in his town or village he will mention his particular street, and if questioned in his street he will indicate his house. So it is with the Nuer. A Nuer met outside Nuerland says that his home is *cieng Nath*, Nuerland. He may also refer to his tribal country as his *cieng*, though the more usual expression for this is *rol*. If one asks him in his tribe what is his *cieng*, he will name his village or tribal section according to the context. Generally he will name either his tertiary tribal section or his village, but he may give his primary or secondary section. If asked in his village he will mention the name of his hamlet or indicate his homestead or the end of the village in which his homestead is situated. Hence if a man says '*Wa ciengda*', 'I am going home', outside his village he means that he is returning to it; if in his village he means that he is going to his hamlet; if in his hamlet he means that he is going to his homestead. *Cieng* thus means homestead, hamlet, village, and tribal sections of various dimensions.

The variations in the meaning of the word *cieng* are not due to the inconsistencies of language, but to the relativity of the group-values to which it refers. I emphasize this character of structural distance at an early stage because an understanding of it is necessary to follow the account of various social groups which we are about to describe. Once it is understood, the apparent contradictions in our account will be seen to be contradictions in the structure itself, being, in fact, a quality of it. The argument is here introduced in its application to local communities, which are treated more fully in the next chapter, and its application to lineages and age-sets is postponed to Chapters V and VI.

829 A man is a member of a political group of any kind in virtue of his non-membership of other groups of the same kind. He sees them as groups and their members see him as a member of a group, and his relations with them are controlled by the structural distance between the groups concerned. But a man

does not see himself as a member of that same group in so far as 829
he is a member of a segment of it which stands outside of and is opposed to other segments of it. Hence a man can be a member of a group and yet not a member of it. This is a fundamental principle of Nuer political structure. Thus a man is a member of his tribe in its relation to other tribes, but he is not a member of his tribe in the relation of his segment of it to other segments of the same kind. Likewise a man is a member of his tribal segment in its relation to other segments, but he is not a member of it in the relation of his village to other villages of the same segment. A characteristic of any political group is hence its invariable tendency towards fission and the opposition of its segments, and another characteristic is its tendency towards fusion with other groups of its own order in opposition to political segments larger than itself. Political values are thus always, structurally speaking, in conflict. One value attaches a man to his group and another to a segment of it in opposition to other segments of it, and the value which controls his action is a function of the social situation in which he finds himself. For a man sees himself as a member of a group only in opposition to other groups and he sees a member of another group as a member of a social unity however much it may be split into opposed segments.

Therefore the diagram presented on p. 114[1] illustrates political structure in a very crude and formal way. It cannot very easily be pictured diagrammatically, for political relations are relative and dynamic. They are best stated as tendencies to conform to certain values in certain situations, and the value is determined by the structural relationships of the persons who compose the situation. Thus whether and on which side a man fights in a dispute depends on the structural relationship of the persons engaged in it and of his own relationship to each party.

We need to refer to another important principle of Nuer 186
political structure: the smaller the local group the stronger the 621
sentiment uniting its members. Tribal sentiment is weaker than 619
the sentiment of one of its segments and the sentiment of a seg- 571
ment is weaker than the sentiment of a village which is part of
it. Logically this might be supposed to be the case, for if unity

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[1] [See category 116 — Analyst.]

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

186 within a group is a function of its opposition to groups of the
621 same kind it might be surmised that the sentiment of unity
619 within a group must be stronger than the sentiment of unity
within a larger group that contains it. But it is also evident
571 that the smaller the group the more the contacts between its members, the more varied are these contacts, and the more they are co-operative. In a big group like the tribe contacts between its members are infrequent and corporate action is limited to occasional military excursions. In a small group like the village not only are there daily residential contacts, often of a co-operative nature, but the members are united by close agnatic, cognatic, and affinal ties which can be expressed in reciprocal action. These become fewer and more distant the wider the group, and the cohesion of a political group is undoubtedly dependent on the number and strength of ties of a non-political kind.

It must also be stated that political actualities are confused and conflicting. They are confused because they are not always, even in a political context, in accord with political values, though they tend to conform to them, and because social ties of a different kind operate in the same field, sometimes strengthening them and sometimes running counter to them. They are conflicting because the values that determine them are, owing to the relativity of political structure, themselves in conflict. Consistency of political actualities can only be seen when the dynamism and relativity of political structure are understood and the relation of political structure to other social systems is taken into consideration.

CHAPTER IV

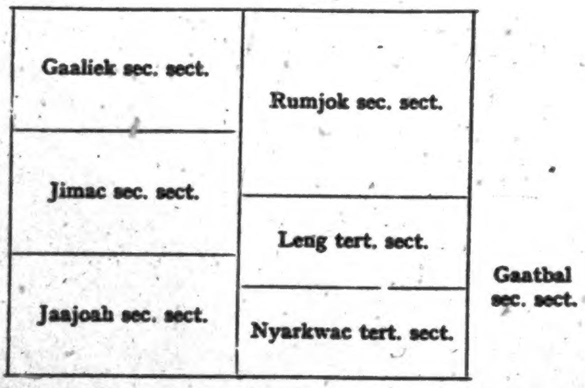
THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

I

NUER tribes are split into segments. The largest segments we call primary tribal sections and these are further segmented into secondary tribal sections which are further segmented into tertiary tribal sections. Experience shows that primary, secondary, and tertiary are sufficient terms of definition, and in the smallest tribes probably fewer terms are required. A tertiary tribal section comprises a number of village communities which are composed of kinship and domestic groups. 619

Thus, the Lou tribe, as shown in the diagram below, is segmented into the Gun and Mor primary sections. The Gun primary section is segmented into the Rumjok and Gaatbal secondary sections. The Gaatbal secondary section is further segmented into the Leng and Nyarkwac tertiary sections. Only a few segments are shown diagrammatically: Gaaliek is split into Nyaak and Buth, Rumjok into Falker, Nyajikany, Kwacgien, &c., and so on.

LOU TRIBE


Mor prim. sect.
Gun prim. sect.
Gaaliek sec. sect.
Rumjok sec. sect.
Jimac sec. sect.
Leng tert. sect.
Gaatbal sec. sect.
Jaajoah sec. sect.
Nyarkwac tert. sect.

The diagram on p. 140 shows the primary sections of the Eastern Gaagwang tribe and the primary and secondary sections of the Eastern Gaajak and Gaajok tribes. They are

[p. 139]

presented as accurately as my knowledge permits, but anyone acquainted with the difficulties of unravelling the complex system of Nuer tribal divisions will not be surprised if he discovers sections which he knows under different names or others which he may think should not have been omitted. I am not certain of the secondary sections of the Gaagwang tribe, which I have not visited.

EASTERN JIKANY TRIBES

	Gaajok tribe	*Gaagwang tribe*	*Gaajak tribe*	
Laang prim. sect.	Thiur sec. sect.	Gaatcika prim. sect.	Nyayan sec. sect.[1]	Gaagwong prim. sect.
	Dwong sec. sect.		Cany sec. sect.	
	Kwith sec. sect.		Wau sec. sect.	
Wangkac prim. sect.	Minyaal sec. sect.	Nyingee prim. sect.	Kong sec. sect.[2]	Reng prim. sect.
	Wang sec. sect.		Col sec. sect.[3]	
	Nyathol sec. sect.		Dhilleak sec. sect.[4]	
Yol prim. sect.	Pwot sec. sect.	Nyaang prim. sect.	Tar sec. sect.	Thiang prim. sect.
	Kwal sec. sect.			
	Yiic sec. sect.		Kang sec. sect.	
	Cam sec. sect.			
	Kwul sec. sect.		Lony sec. sect.	

Among the Western Jikany the Gaagwang appear to be classed as part of the Gaajok tribe whose country stretches on both sides of the Bahr-el-Ghazal, the Gaajak tribe living to the south of that river. The primary sections of these two tribes, Gaagwong, Reng, Thiang, Laang, Wangkac, and Yol, are the same as in the east, but some secondary sections which are important to the north of the Sobat are not to be found, except as very small clusters, on the Bahr-el-Ghazal, and vice versa. The reason for this is that certain lineages migrated eastwards while others remained in the homeland.

After having satisfied myself that the segmentation of other

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[1] With which goes Nyajaani.

[2] Also called Nyaruny.

[3] Also called Tiek and Yaar.

[4] Also called Gying.

Nuer tribes is on the same pattern as that of the Lou and Jikany tribes I did not make detailed lists of their divisions, being interested in new and different inquiries. I include, however, some diagrammatic representations of tribal segmentation in Gaawar, Lak, and Thiang countries, for which I am indebted to Mr. B. A. Lewis, at one time Commissioner for Zeraf River District.

GAAWAR TRIBE

Radh prim. sect.	*Bar prim. sect.*	
Kerfail sec. sect.	Bang tert. sect.	Lidh sec. sect.
Nyadakwon sec. sect.	Jamogh tert. sect.	
Per sec. sect.	Caam tert. sect.	Gatkwa sec. sect.
Nyaigua sec. sect.	Gatkwa tert. sect.	
Jitheib sec. sect.		

LAK TRIBE

Jenyang prim. sect.	*Kwacbur prim. sect.*	
Kudwop sec. sect.	Nyawar tert. sect.	Tobut sec. sect.
	Dongrial tert. sect.	
Nyapir sec. sect.	Thiang tert. sect.	Lak sec. sect.
	Kar. tert. sect.	
	Cuak tert. sect.	

THIANG TRIBE

Riah prim. sect.	*Bang prim. sect.*	
Juak sec. sect.	Gul tert. sect.	Nyangur sec. sect.
	Bedid tert. sect.	
Manyal sec. sect.	Dwong tert. sect.	
	Kwoth sec. sect.	
Giin sec. sect.	Cuol sec. sect.	

000 It will have been observed that I have not attempted to list all the sections of each tribe, but have merely tried to indicate the mode of segmentation so that the relation between tribal divisions and lineages may be more clearly understood in the following chapter.

II

619 Segments of a tribe have many of the characteristics of the tribe itself. Each has its distinctive name, its common sentiment, and its unique territory. Usually one section is clearly divided from another by a wide stretch of bush or by a river. Segments of the same tribe also tend to turn in different directions for their dry season pastures, as is shown on the sketch-maps on pp. 56, 58, and 60,[1] so that the spatial divisions of the rains are maintained, and may be accentuated during the drought, though, as we have pointed out, in the larger tribes to the east of the Nile severity of natural conditions may also produce closer interrelations than in the smaller tribes to the west.

The smaller the tribal segment the more compact its territory, the more contiguous its members, the more varied and more intimate their general social ties, and the stronger therefore its sentiment of unity. As we shall see, a tribal segment is crystallized around a lineage of the dominant clan of the tribe and the smaller the segment the closer the genealogical relationship between members of this clan fragment. Also the smaller the segment the more the age-set system determines behaviour and produces corporate action within it. Political cohesion thus not only varies with variations of political distance but is also a function of structural distance of other kinds.

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628 Each segment is itself segmented and there is opposition between its parts. The members of any segment unite for war against adjacent segments of the same order and unite with these adjacent segments against larger sections. Nuer themselves state this structural principle clearly in the expression of their political values. Thus they say that if the Leng tertiary section of the Lou tribe fights the Nyarkwac tertiary section—and, in fact, there has been a long feud between them—the villages which compose each section will combine to fight; but

[1] [See cat. 116 — Analyst]

619 628 if there is a quarrel between the Nyarkwac tertiary section and the Rumjok secondary section, as has occurred recently over water rights at Fading, Leng and Nyarkwac will unite against their common enemy Rumjok which, in its turn, forms a coalition of the various segments into which it is divided. If there is a fight between the Mor and the Gun primary sections, Rumjok and Gaatbal will unite against the combined Mor sections: Gaaliek, Jimac, and Jaajoah. If there is fighting against the Gaajok or the Gaawar the primary sections, Gun and Mor, will, at any rate in theory, combine and a united Lou tribe will take the field, since both sections belong to the same political group and since their dominant lineages belong to the same clan. Certainly they used to unite in raids on the Dinka.

619 628 613 Among the Eastern Gaajok, Minyal, Wang, and Nyathol sections combine against Yol. Also Thiur, Dwong, and Kwith sections unite for war. These fights between tribal sections and the feuds that result from them, though based on a territorial principle, are often represented in terms of lineages, since there is a close relation between territorial segments and lineage segments, and Nuer habitually express social obligations in a kinship idiom. Thus in telling me that Wangkac and Yol would unite for war against any other section Nuer stated the proposition by saying that the WANGKAC and YOL lineages, which are the dominant lineages in these sections, would unite because their ancestors were sons of the same mother. We shall see in Chapter V that Nuer generally speak in such terms.

619 628 This principle of segmentation and the opposition between segments is the same in every section of a tribe and extends beyond the tribe to relations between tribes, especially among the smaller Western Nuer tribes, which coalesce more easily and frequently in raiding the Dinka and in fighting one another than the larger tribes to the east of the Nile. Thus a man of the Fadang section of the Bor tribe exemplified it when he told me, 'We fight against the Rengyan, but when either of us is fighting a third party we combine with them'. It can be stated in hypothetical terms by the Nuer themselves and can best be represented in this way. In the diagram on p. 144, when Z^1 fights Z^2 no other section is involved. When Z^1 fights Y^1, Z^1 and Z^2 unite as Y^2. When Y^1 fights X^1, Y^1 and Y^2 unite, and so do X^1

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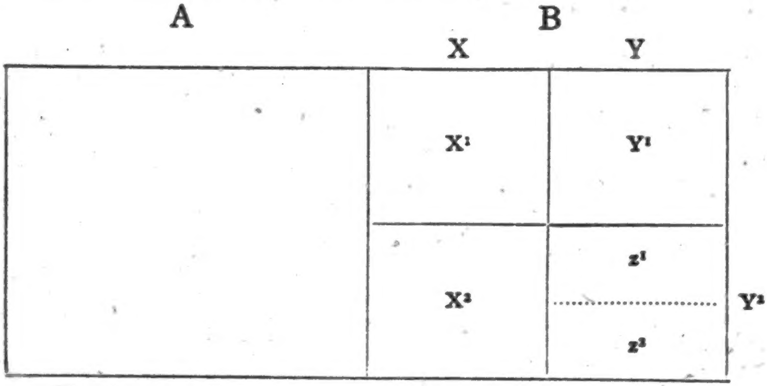
and X^2. When X^1 fights A, X^1, X^2, Y^1, and Y^2 all unite as B. When A raids the Dinka A and B may unite.



The larger tribal sections were almost autonomous groups and acted as such in their enmities and alliances. At one time they would be fighting among themselves and at another would be combining against a third party. These combinations were not always as regular and simple as they were explained to me and as I have stated them. I give a few examples of fighting between tribal sections. One of the worst wars in Nuer history occurred in the last generation between the Gun and the Mor moieties of the Lou tribe. It was known as *kur luny yak*, the war of letting loose the hyena, because so many people were killed that the dead were left for the hyenas to eat. It is said that in this struggle men displayed unusual ferocity, even cutting off arms to seize quickly ivory armlets. There was a lengthy, and more recent, feud between the Leng and the Nyarkwac tertiary sections of the Lou tribe which has continued up to the present. It sprang out of an earlier fight between Thiang and Yol which once formed sub-sections of the Nyarkwac. The ancestors of the dominant lineages in the Leng and Yol divisions were brothers, whereas the ancestor of the dominant lineage of the Thiang division stood to these brothers in the relationship of sister's son. For a long while Yol and Thiang lived peaceably together, but some thirty years ago a fight broke out between them, and Thiang, defeated, fled to seek protection among the Leng section. The Yol sent messages to the Leng telling them that they were not to receive their enemies or give them asylum. The Leng replied that the ancestor of the LENG lineage was the maternal uncle of the ancestor of the THIANG lineage and that they could not refuse asylum to their sisters' sons. This attitude involved Yol (Nyarkwac) in a second war, this time against a combination of Leng and Thiang. Other recent Lou feuds were between the

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Falkir and Nyajikany divisions of the Rumjok secondary section and between various local communities of the Mor primary section, particularly between two divisions of the Jimac secondary section.

In Eastern Gaajok country the Yol primary section joined the Gaagwang tribe, who seem to have identified themselves so much with the Gaajok tribe that we may almost speak of them, as we can to the west of the Nile, as a single tribe separated from the Gaajak by the wide Macar swamps, against several, if not all, sections of the Gaajak tribe. Yol fought Nyayan while Gaagwang fought Reng and Kang. About half a century ago the Laang and Wangkac primary sections of the Gaajok tribe were involved in a long feud and there was also warfare between the Yol and Wangkac sections in which Yol, assisted by their allies the Gaagwang tribe, were victorious; the Wangkac being so heavily defeated that they moved southwards to the banks of the Pibor river. Here, they say, they were attacked by *Turuk* (Arabs of some kind) and moved north again to the site of their old homes. They were too exhausted to resume their feud with the Yol section. In spite of these internal feuds, if any section of the Gaajok tribe is engaged in warfare with the Lou tribe all its sections will come to assist the threatened section if it is not strong enough to resist whatever section of the Lou is opposed to it. There have also been feuds between the Eastern Gaajak sections, e.g. between Thiang and Reng. When two tribes fight, other tribes remain neutral, and if two sections of a tribe are at war with one another the other sections of each may leave them to fight it out if they are well matched and do not appeal for assistance. Some of Miss Soule's informants pointed out that when there was trouble a few years ago between the Yol section of the Gaajok tribe and the Lony section of the Gaajak tribe they were strong enough to fight their own battle, but had Lony not been strong enough to fight single-handed then the Kaang and Tar, and possibly other, sections of the Gaajak would have come to its assistance, in which case the Gaajok sections would have joined Yol. They also pointed out that at present there is trouble between the Luluaa section and the Wang section. There is also trouble between various sections of Wangkac. If Luluaa and Wang begin to fight then the Wangkac sections will compose their differences and join Luluaa.

In accordance with the general tendency to the west of the Nile the Western Gaajok and Gaajak tribes are not only smaller but less united than the Eastern Gaajok and Gaajak. Both, on the Bahr-el-Ghazal, had frequent and bitter internal feuds. There was a fierce battle between the Gai division of the Gaagwong primary section and two other divisions of the same section, the Kwoth and the

619 Bor, whose dominant lineages spring from one mother. The Kwoth and Bor divisions were defeated and migrated southwards to settle 628 at Kwac in Rengyan country. The same Gai division also had a feud with the Reng primary division, after which it moved into Karlual country. There were numerous other feuds in the Gaajak tribe. The Gaajok tribe once lived entirely on the left bank of the Bahr-el-Ghazal and their present extension on the right bank is a consequence of migration following feuds.

The Leek tribe once all lived on the right bank of the Bahr-el-Ghazal. Here two of its primary sections, Cuaagh and Deng who lived to the west of the Gany river, fought the third primary section, the Keunyang (Karlual), who lived to the east of that river, and being defeated crossed the Bahr-el-Ghazal and settled on its left bank. The story is that some aristocrats of the Nyapir section and some aristocrats of the Nyawah section used offensive expressions in songs about one another. These songs led to fighting between the young men, one of whom on each side was killed. There was further fighting in consequence, and finally Deng and Cuaagh crossed the river. In the following year they recrossed the Bahr-el-Ghazal to camp in the dry season on the right bank and on their return to their villages they drove before them herds belonging to Keunyang. Six of their girls came back to collect their dairy vessels which they had left in a camp hut and were waylaid and killed by some Keunyang men. This act was considered a serious breach of the rules of war, for the Nuer do not kill their own womenfolk. Because of it the Deng uttered a curse, according to which it is forbidden to an aristocrat of Keunyang who crosses the Bahr-el-Ghazal and settles among the Deng or Cuaagh, and also to an aristocrat of Deng or Cuaagh who moves southwards and settles among the Keunyang, to build a cattle-byre in the usual manner. The curse also causes an aristocrat who thus changes his residence to beget only boys for his first few children because of the slain girls. When the Government raided Karlual (Keunyang) country many Keunyang aristocrats crossed the river to live in Deng and Cuaagh country. At the present day many Deng and Cuaagh spend the dry season in Keunyang country because their own country is not rich in good pasture grasses but consists mainly of marsh grasses which are not so nourishing.

Within each of these primary sections there were constant feuds. Thus in Karlual country, Riaagh, Gom, Jiom, Nyaagh, Jikul, and Ngwol sections have been frequently at feud with one another. It would be tedious to recount the occasions and outcome of these petty feuds. I want only to make it clear that the villages occupied

PLATE XVI

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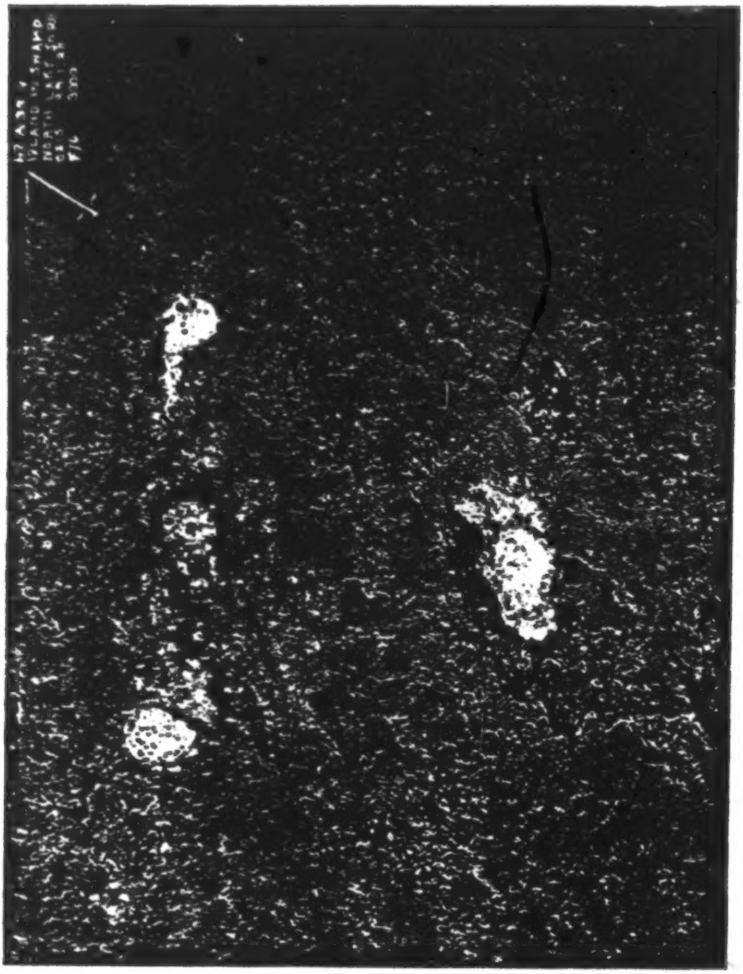

Air-view of villages (Nuong)
Royal Air Force Official—Crown Copyright reserved

[Face p. 146]

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by these minor sections, Tutgar (Ngwol), Nyang (Riaagh), Nyueny (Juak), Kol (Jikul), &c., are only a few miles from their nearest neighbours, all of them being contained in a radius of five miles. It is between villages and tertiary tribal sections that fights most frequently take place and feuds develop.

I could give many more examples of feuds, but to no purpose, for those I have cited amply illustrate the lack of political control in Nuer tribes. We may conclude that a man's tribe only claims his allegiance in intertribal fighting and in wars against the Dinka. In normal times a man thinks and acts as a member of very much smaller local groups with the members of which he has manifold contacts.

III

619 We may use the diagram on p. 144 to emphasize the principle of contradiction in political structure. A member of Z^2 tertiary section of tribe B sees himself as a member of Z^2 in relation to Z^1, and all other members of Z^2 see themselves as members of that group in relation to Z^1 and are so regarded by members of Z^1. But he regards himself as a member of Y^2 and not of Z^2 in relation to Y^1 and is so regarded by members of Y^1. Likewise he regards himself as a member of Y and not of Y^2 in relation to X, and as a member of the tribe B, and not of its primary section Y, in relation to tribe A. Any segment sees itself as an independent unit in relation to another segment of the same section, but sees both segments as a unity in relation to another section; and a section which from the point of view of its members comprises opposed segments is seen by members of other sections as an unsegmented unit. Thus there is, as we have pointed out earlier, always contradiction in the definition of a political group, for it is a group only in relation to other groups. A tribal segment is a political group in relation to other segments of the same kind and they jointly form a tribe only in relation to other Nuer tribes and adjacent foreign tribes which form part of the same political system, and without these relations very little meaning can be attached to the concepts of tribal segment and tribe. We make here the same point as we made in discussing the word *cieng*;[1] that political values are relative and that the political system is an equilibrium

[1] [See pp. 135-137, cat. 116, —Analyst]

619 between opposed tendencies towards fission and fusion, between the tendency of all groups to segment, and the tendency of all groups to combine with segments of the same order. The tendency towards fusion is inherent in the segmentary character of Nuer political structure, for although any group tends to split into opposed parts these parts must tend to fuse in relation to other groups, since they form part of a segmentary system. Hence fission and fusion in political groups are two aspects of the same segmentary principle, and the Nuer tribe and its divisions are to be understood as an equilibrium between these two contradictory, yet complementary, tendencies. Physical environment, mode of livelihood, poor communications, a simple technology, and sparse food-supply—all, in fact, that we call their oecology—to some extent explain the demographic features of Nuer political segmentation, but the tendency towards segmentation must be defined as a fundamental principle of their social structure.

There must always, therefore, be something arbitrary about our formal definition of a tribe by the characters we have earlier listed. The political system is an expanding series of opposed segments from the relations within the smallest tribal section to intertribal and foreign relations, for opposition between segments of the smallest section seems to us to be of the same structural character as the opposition between a tribe and its Dinka neighbours, though the form of its expression differs. Often it is by no means easy to decide whether a group should be regarded as a tribe or as the segment of a tribe, for political structure has a dynamic quality. Using payment of bloodwealth as the principal criterion we class the Eastern Gaajok and Gaajak as distinct tribes because there is no compensation for homicide between them, but they consider themselves to be a single community in relation to the Lou. The tribal value is still recognized throughout Lou country, but, in fact, the Gun and the Mor sections are largely autonomous and it may be doubted whether compensation for homicide would actually be paid between them, though people say that it ought to be paid. It appears that so many people were killed in feuds between the Yol and Wangkac primary sections of the Gaajok tribe that all payments for homicide lapsed. On the other hand, I was told

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that at the time when the influence of the Lou prophets Ngundeng and Gwek was at its height compensation was for a time paid between the Lou and the Gaajok. In the larger tribes the segments recognize a formal unity, but there may be little actual cohesion. The tribal value is still affirmed, but actual relations may be in conflict with it since they are based on local allegiances within the tribe, and, in our opinion, it is this conflict between rival values within a territorial system which is the essence of the political structure.

Nuer tribes are an evaluation of territorial distribution, and tribal and intertribal and foreign relations are standardized modes of behaviour through which the values are expressed. The tribal value is, therefore, relative and at any time is attached to a certain extension of an expanding series of structural relations without being inevitably fixed to that extension. Moreover, it is not only relative because what we designate a tribe to-day may be two tribes to-morrow, but it can only be said to determine behaviour when a certain set of structural relations are in operation, mainly acts of hostility between tribal segments and between a tribe and other groups of the same structural order as itself, or acts likely to provoke aggression. A tribe very rarely engages in corporate activities, and, furthermore, the tribal value determines behaviour in a definite and restricted field of social relations and is only one of a series of political values, some of which are in conflict with it. The same is true of its segments. We would, therefore, suggest that Nuer political groups be defined, in terms of values, by the relations between their segments and their interrelations as segments of a larger system in an organization of society in certain social situations, and not as parts of a kind of fixed framework within which people live.

We do not doubt that there is an interdependence between the various sectional interrelations and the entire political system of which they form part, but this cannot easily be demonstrated. It has been noted that the smaller the local group the more cohesive it is and the more contacts of various kinds its members have with one another. There is less solidarity the wider we extend the circle from a village to adjacent tribes. It might be assumed, therefore, that there is always greater

619 opposition between two groups than between the segments of either and that the segments are held together, as it were, by this external pressure, but we cannot admit that this view accords with the facts, because greater hostility appears to be felt between villages, groups of villages, and tertiary tribal sections than between larger tribal sections and between tribes. Probably the raids conducted tribally and in tribal federation against the Dinka had an integrating action, but the Dinka were not aggressive against the Nuer and it seems that the maintenance of tribal structure must rather be attributed to opposition between its minor segments than to any outside pressure. If this be so, and a consideration of the institution of the feud suggests that it is so, we arrive at the conclusion that the more multiple and frequent the contacts between members of a segment the more intense the opposition between its parts. However paradoxical this conclusion may at first seem we are led to it both by observation and by reflection on what constitutes a segmentary system.

IV

628 We have used the term 'feud' in the last section in the sense of lengthy mutual hostility between local communities within a tribe. This broad and slightly vague usage seems justified by convention and also, as we shall show, because, although responsibility for homicide and the duty of exacting vengeance directly fall only on the close agnatic kin of slayer and slain, the communities to which the two parties belong are, in one way or another, involved in the hostility that ensues and, often enough, in any fighting that may result from the dispute. Strictly, however, the word might be considered more appropriately used to describe the relations between the kin on both sides in a situation of homicide, for it then refers to a specific institution. We sometimes, therefore, speak of the 'blood-feud' to emphasize this restricted and more clearly defined meaning.

Blood-feuds are a tribal institution, for they can only occur where a breach of law is recognized since they are the way in which reparation is obtained. Fear of incurring a blood-feud is, in fact, the most important legal sanction within a tribe and the main guarantee of an individual's life and property. If a community of one tribe attempts to avenge a homicide on a community of another tribe a state of intertribal war, rather than a state of feud, ensues, and there is no way of settling the dispute by arbitration. 628

As Nuer are very prone to fighting, people are frequently killed. 578 Indeed it is rare that one sees a senior man who does not show marks of club or spear. A Nuer gave me the following causes of fighting: a dispute about a cow; a cow or goat eats a man's millet and he strikes it; a man strikes another's little son; adultery; watering rights in the dry season; pasturage rights; a man borrows an object, particularly a dance ornament, without asking its owner's permission. A Nuer will at once fight if he considers that he has been insulted, and they are very sensitive and easily take offence. When a man feels that he has suffered an injury there is no authority to whom he can make a complaint and from whom he can obtain redress, so he at once challenges the man who has wronged him to a duel and the challenge must be accepted. There is no other way of settling a dispute and a man's courage is his only immediate protection against aggression. Only when kinship or age-set status inhibits an appeal to arms does a Nuer hesitate to utter a challenge, for it does not occur to him to ask advice first, and no one would listen to unsolicited advice. From their earliest years [865] children are encouraged by their elders to settle all disputes by fighting, and they grow up to regard skill in fighting the most necessary accomplishment and courage the highest virtue.

Boys fight with spiked bracelets. Men of the same village or camp fight with clubs, for it is a convention that spears must not be used between close neighbours lest one of them be killed and the community be split by a blood-feud. It is also a convention that no third person may take part in the fight, even though he be a close kinsman of one of the combatants. Once a fight has begun neither party can give way and they have to continue till one or the other is badly injured unless, as generally happens, people pull them away from each other, loudly protesting, and then stand between them.

When a fight starts between persons of different villages it is 628 with the spear; every adult male of both communities takes part in it; and it cannot be stopped before considerable loss of

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

628 life has ensued. Nuer know this and, unless they are very angry, are reluctant to start a fight with a neighbouring village and are often willing to allow a leopard-skin chief or the elders to intervene. I have seen a fight of this kind prevented by the mediation of elders on both sides, but it was clear that their mediation would have availed little if the young men had been eager to come to blows. To-day such fights are less common because fear of Government intervention acts as a deterrent, but I have seen camps and even tribal sections massed for war and on the verge of fighting, and at one time fights must have been very frequent.

Tribes sometimes raided each other for cattle, but fighting between them was rare. Inter-community fighting and the feuds that result from it are part of the political relations that exist between segments of a common tribal organization. Thus a Leek man said to me: 'We have our fighting among ourselves and the Gaajok have their fighting among themselves. We do not fight the Gaajok. We fight only among ourselves. They have their own fights.' People are killed in these fights and blood-feuds thereby commence. Within a tribe there is a method by which they can be concluded by arbitration.

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We give a concise account of the procedure for settling a blood-feud, without describing the detail of ritual. As soon as a man slays another he hastens to the home of a leopard-skin chief to cleanse himself from the blood he has spilt and to seek sanctuary from the retaliation he has incurred. He may neither eat nor drink till the blood of the dead man has been let out of his body, for it is thought to pass into it in some way, and to this end the chief makes one or two vertical incisions on his arm by a downward stroke from the shoulder with a fishing spear. The slayer presents the chief with a steer, ram, or he-goat, which the chief sacrifices. This rite and the mark of Cain on the arm are known as *bir*. As soon as the kinsmen of the dead man know that he has been killed they seek to avenge his death on the slayer, for vengeance is the most binding obligation of paternal kinship and an epitome of all its obligations. It would be great shame to the kinsmen were they to make no effort to avenge the homicide.

cide. By living with the chief as his guest from the moment his arm has been cut till the final settlement, the slayer has asylum, for the chief is sacred and blood must not be shed in his homestead. It is possible that men only take refuge with a chief when the danger of vengeance is very great, but it seems to be the general practice. 628 624 [718]

While the slayer is at the chief's home the avengers keep watch on him (*bim*) from time to time to see if he leaves his sanctuary and gives them a chance to spear him. They take any opportunity that offers to kill him, but they are not very persistent in seeking an opportunity. 628 624 This state of affairs may go on for some weeks before the chief opens negotiations for settlement with the dead man's people, for his overtures are not likely to meet with a favourable response till the mortuary ceremony has been held and tempers have cooled a little. The negotiations are leisurely conducted. The chief first finds out what cattle the slayer's people (*jithunga*) possess and that they are prepared to pay compensation. I do not think that it would often happen that they would refuse to pay blood-cattle, unless they lived very far from the avengers or there were a number of unsettled feuds between the sections concerned, though they might not have the intention of handing them all over. He then visits the dead man's people (*jiran*) and asks them to accept cattle for the life. They usually refuse, for it is a point of honour to be obstinate, but their refusal does not mean that they are unwilling to accept compensation. The chief knows this and insists on their acceptance, even threatening to curse them if they do not give way, and his exhortations are supported by the advice of distant paternal kinsmen and cognatic relatives who will not receive any of the cattle and need not, therefore, show such pride and stubbornness, but who have a right to make their opinion known in virtue of their relationship to the dead man. The voice of compromise is also supported by the bias of custom. Nevertheless, the close kinsmen must refuse to listen to it till the chief has reached the limit of his arguments, and when they give way they declare that they are accepting the cattle only in order to honour him and not because they are ready to take cattle for the life of their dead kinsman.

In theory forty to fifty head of cattle are paid, but it is

628 624 unlikely that they will all be paid at once and the debt may continue for years. The ceremonies of atonement are performed when some twenty have been handed over, and then the slayer's kin may go about without fear of being waylaid, for the time being at any rate, for they are not safe from vengeance till all the cattle have been paid, and possibly not even then. The chief takes the cattle to the dead man's home. The slayer's people would not venture to accompany him. They are partly distributed among the kinsmen of the dead man and partly used to marry a wife to his name to give him heirs. Even if a man on either side has been killed cattle must be paid by both parties, though perhaps only twenty head by each, for the ghosts must
[783] be appeased and the honour of the living must be upheld. Also, sacrifices must be performed to rid the villages of death, which is loose in them and must be sent into the bush, and kinsmen on both sides must be purified from their uncleanness. For his part in the proceedings the chief receives, apart from meat of sacrifices, two beasts, but he has to give one of these to an agnatic kinsman who assists him. Often he gains nothing, as he is expected to give the slayer a cow to help him pay compensation and, moreover, he has had the expense of providing him with lengthy hospitality.

628 578 [784] A homicide does not concern only the man who has committed it, but his close agnatic kinsmen also. There is mutual hostility between the kinsmen on both sides and they may not, on penalty of death, that will inevitably fall on those who break the injunction, eat or drink with one another or from the same dishes and vessels the other has eaten or drunk from, even if in the home of a man who is not kin to either party. This prohibition ceases after the cattle have been paid and sacrifices made, but close kinsmen on either side will not eat with one another for years, even for a generation or two, for reasons of sentiment. 'A bone (the dead man) lies between them.' Indeed, all Nuer recognize that in spite of payments and sacrifices a feud goes on for ever, for the dead man's kin never cease 'to have war in their hearts'. For years after cattle have been paid close agnates of the slayer avoid close agnates of the dead man, especially at dances, for in the excitement they engender the mere knocking against a man whose kinsman has been slain may cause a

fight to break out, because the offence is never forgiven and the score must finally be paid with a life. When the dead man is married a wife the bride is rubbed with ashes by her dead husband's kinsmen and God is invoked by them that she may bear a male child who will avenge his father. Such a child is a *gat ter*, a child of feud. At the sacrifices the ghost is told that his kinsmen have accepted cattle and will marry him a wife with them, but he is assured that one day they will avenge him properly with the spear. 'A Nuer is proud and wants a man's body in vengeance and not his cattle. When he has killed a man he has paid the debt and then his heart is glad.' Hence, though the chief admonishes the relatives of the dead man at the ceremonies of settlement that the feud is ended and must not be reopened, Nuer know that 'a feud never ends'. There may be peace for a time for the reasons that persuaded the kinsmen to accept compensation and on account of the cattle they have received, but enmity continues and the people on both sides remain *jiter*, people who are at feud, even if there is no overt hostility. There is no frequent fighting or continuous unabated hostility, but the sore rankles and the feud, though formally concluded, may at any time break out again. 628 578

VI

We have said that feuds create a state of hostility between lineages and thereby, as we shall explain further, between whole tribal sections; and that there is no very great difference between the occasional efforts to exact vengeance when feuds are still unsettled and the latent hostility that persists when they have been settled. This is only true, however, when the homicides are between primary, secondary, and tertiary tribal sections. In smaller groups it is not so, for, in spite of the strength of the feelings aroused and their persistence after compensation has been paid, feuds have there to be settled more quickly and are not so likely to break out again after settlement. 628

What happens when a man kills another depends on the relationship between the persons concerned and on their structural positions. There are different payments for a true Nuer, for a Dinka living in Nuerland, and, among the Eastern Jikany, for a member of the aristocratic clan (see p. 217). The

628 ability to prosecute a feud and thereby to obtain redress by a life or by payment of cattle depends to some extent on the strength of a man's lineage and on his kin relationships. But the intensity of a feud and the difficulty of settling it depend chiefly on the size of the group concerned in it. If a man kills another who is closely related to him—his paternal cousin, for example—cattle are still paid, though fewer, probably about twenty head. One of the sources of contribution, the father's brothers, or their sons, would be the recipients of compensation and therefore cannot pay it. None the less some cattle have to be paid as it is necessary to compensate the family of the dead man, to provide the ghost with a wife, and to perform the due sacrifices. I was told that in such cases the matter is quickly settled. Probably a blood-feud can be settled more easily if it is within a clan, for Nuer consider it wrong for clansmen to engage in a feud. After payment has been made they say: 'The feud has been cut behind, we have returned to kinship.' It is also said that if there has been much intermarriage between two groups a feud is unlikely to develop.

When a man kills a fellow villager or a man of a nearby village with which his village has close social relations a feud is soon settled, because the people on both sides have got to mix and because there are sure to be between them many ties of kinship and affinity. It is pointed out to the ghost that cattle have been paid and that it is impossible to avenge him by taking life because no one would be left alive if the feud were continued between kinsmen and neighbours. Corporate life is incompatible with a state of feud. 789 When a man spears another of a nearby village it is customary for the people of the wounder's village to send the spear which caused the injury to the wounded man's people so that they can treat it magically to prevent the wound proving fatal. They also send a sheep for sacrifice. By so doing they intimate their hope that the wound will soon heal and that, in any case, they do not want to incur a feud on account of a personal quarrel. After this courtesy, even if the man dies his kinsmen are likely to accept compensation without great reluctance. If a man dies many years after having received a wound the death is attributed to this wound, but compensation is likely to be accepted without demur, and on a reduced scale.

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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PLATE XVII

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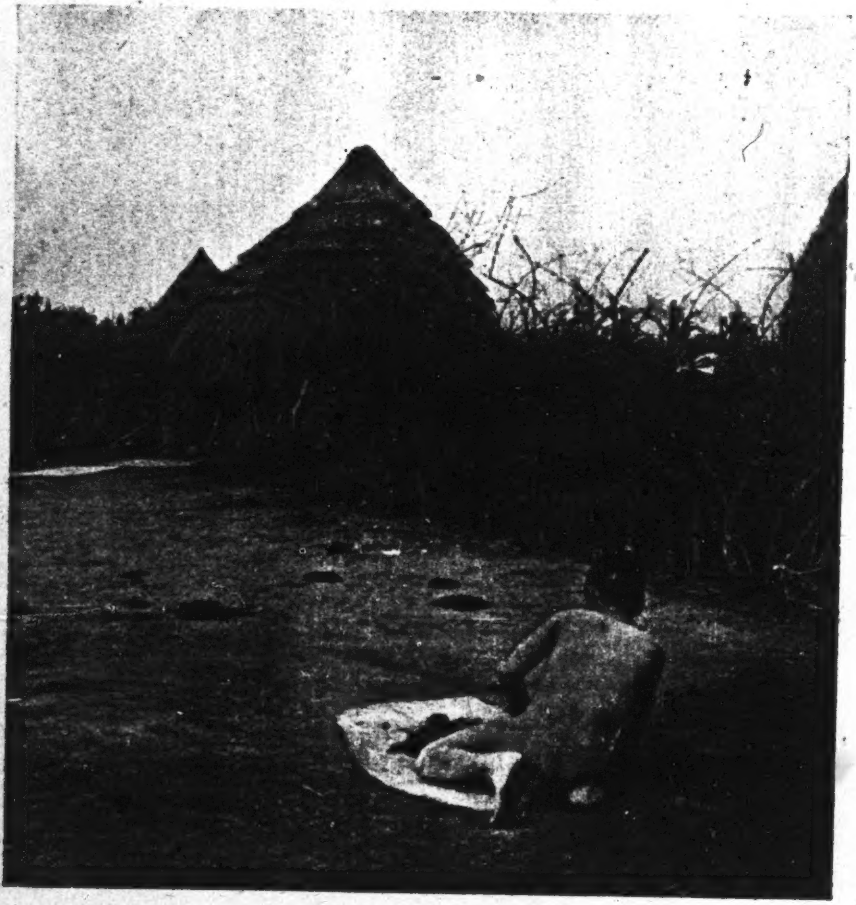

Boy collecting dung-fuel (Lou)

[Face p. 156]

628 When a man has killed a neighbour a cow is often immediately paid over in earnest so that the community may remain at peace. It must not be supposed, however, that the ease with which feuds are settled is an indication of lack of strong indignation or that the difficulty with which they are settled is an indication of greater indignation.

628 182 Feuds are settled with comparative ease in a restricted social milieu where the structural distance between the participants is narrow, but they are more difficult to settle as the milieu expands, until one reaches intertribal relations where no compensation is offered or expected. The degree of social control over feuds varies with the size of the tribal segment, and Nuer themselves have often explained this to me. Long and intense feuds may take place between tertiary tribal sections, but an effort is generally made to close them, for a segment of this size has a strong sense of community, close lineage ties, and some economic interdependence. However, it is far less easy to stop a feud between persons of different tertiary sections than to stop a feud in a village or between neighbouring villages, where a quick and permanent settlement is assured, and unsettled feuds between sections of this size tend to accumulate. This is especially the case where there has not been a single death resulting from a personal quarrel but several deaths in a fight between the two sections. When a fight has taken place between secondary tribal sections there is little chance of exacting vengeance except by a general fight, and people feel less the need to submit to mediation since they have few social contacts and these of a temporary kind, for the relative ease with which feuds are settled is an indication of the cohesion of the community. The larger the segment involved the greater the anarchy that prevails. People say that there is payment of blood-cattle between primary tribal sections, but they do not greatly feel the need of paying it. The tribe is the last stage in this increasing anarchy. It still has nominal political unity, and it is held that feuds between its most distant members can be settled by compensation, but often they are not settled, and if many men are killed in a big fight between large sections nothing is done to avenge them or to pay compensation for their deaths. Their kinsmen abide their time till there is another

628 182 fight. The political integument may in consequence be stretched eventually to the breaking-point and the tribe split into two. The rent between sections enlarges until they have little to do with each other beyond occasional uniting for raids; and feuds between their members are settled, if at all, with greater difficulty and casualness.

VII

The likelihood of a homicide developing into a blood-feud, its force, and its chances of settlement are thus dependent on the structural interrelations of the persons concerned. Moreover, the blood-feud may be viewed as a structural movement between political segments by which the form of the Nuer political system, as we know it, is maintained. It is true that only close agnatic kin of both sides are immediately and directly involved, but feuds between persons belonging to different tribal sections sooner or later influence the interrelations of the whole communities to which they belong.

628 602 [613] The kinsmen of a slain man try to kill the *gwan thunga*, the slayer, but they have a right to kill any of his close agnates (*gaat gwanlen*). They must not kill sons of the mother's brother, father's sister, or mother's sister, because these people do not belong to the slayer's lineage. Also, only the minimal lineages on both sides are directly involved in the feud. However, the significance of the feud may be held to lie less in the ease of settlement within smaller groups than in the difficulties of settlement within larger groups, which participate indirectly in the conflict. We have noted that people at feud may not eat in the same homesteads, and, as a man eats in all the homesteads of his village, the villagers at once come within the scope of the prohibition and enter into a state of ritual opposition to each other. All the people of a village are generally in some way related to one another and have also a strong sense of community, so that if any fighting occurs between their village and another on account of a feud in which some of their members are involved the whole village is likely to be drawn into it. Thus at dances men of each village who attend them arrive in war formation and maintain an unbroken line throughout the dance, so that if one of them is attacked the others are at his side and

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are bound to assist him. People not directly affected by the feud may thus be compelled to assist the principals.

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We have noted, moreover, that the intensity of a feud and the manner of its prosecution depend on the structural relationship of the persons concerned in the political system. A feud cannot be tolerated within a village and it is impossible to maintain one for a long period between nearby villages. Consequently, although fights most frequently occur within a village or between neighbouring villages and camps, a feud, in the sense of a relation between parties between whom there is an unsettled debt of homicide which can be settled either by vengeance or by payment of compensation—a temporary state of active hostility which does not compel immediate settlement but which requires eventual conclusion—can only persist between tribal sections which are near enough to each other for the maintenance of actively hostile relations and far enough from each other for these relations not to inhibit essential social contacts of a more peaceable kind. A feud has little significance unless there are social relations of some kind which can be broken off and resumed, and, at the same time, these relations necessitate eventual settlement if there is not to be complete cleavage. The function of the feud, viewed in this way, is, therefore, to maintain the structural equilibrium between opposed tribal segments which are, nevertheless, politically fused in relation to larger units.

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Through the feud whole sections are left in a state of hostility towards one another, without the hostility leading to frequent warfare, for the scope of direct vengeance is limited to small kinship groups and their efforts to exact it are not incessant. There is a fight between two sections and some people are killed on either side. Only those lineages which have lost a member are in a state of direct feud with the lineages which they have deprived of a member, but through common residence, local patriotism, and a network of kinship ties, the whole sections participate in the enmity that results, and the prosecution of the feuds may lead to further fighting between the communities concerned and to a multiplication of feuds between them. Thus when the Nyarkwac section of the Lou tribe fought the Leng section, the LAM lineage and the people who live with them were

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ranged against the MAR, KWOTH, and MALUAL lineages and the people who live with them; the MANTHIEPNI lineage was ranged against the DUMIEN lineage; and so forth. Only these minimal lineages were involved with one another in the feuds that resulted, and not collateral lineages, even though they took part in the fight in other sectors of it, but the hostility between the sections was common to all their members. A good example of how Nuer feel in such matters is furnished by their reactions at Muot Dit cattle camp when the Government seized hostages to compel them to hand over two prophets. Their main complaint to me was that the hostages did not belong to the same lineages as the prophets and were therefore not directly concerned in the issue. The Government was looking at the affair in territorial terms, they in kinship terms on analogy with the conventions of a feud.

Apart from ritual observances, kinship obligations, community sentiment, and so forth, there is a further reason why blood-feuds between small lineages, especially when there are many of them, develop into states of feud, and tend to maintain hostile feelings between communities. As is explained in Chapter V every community is associated with a lineage in such a way that all persons in the community who are not members of the lineage are assimilated to it in political relations which are, therefore, often expressed in lineage values. Hence a blood-feud between small agnatic groups is translated into a feud, in the more general sense, between the lineages with which these groups are associated through the expression of the disturbed relations in terms of their structure, and the communities associated with the lineages are involved in mutual hostility.

Hostility between smaller segments of a tribe may involve the larger segments of which they form part. A quarrel between two villages may thus, as we have noted, bring about a fight between secondary, and even primary, tribal sections. The interrelations between larger sections are operated, as it were, by the interrelations between smaller sections. When a section in which there are unsettled feuds fights another section all quarrels are neglected for the time and the whole section combines for action.

The feud is a political institution, being an approved and

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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The feud is a political institution, being an approved and regulated mode of behaviour between communities within a tribe. The balanced opposition between tribal segments and their complementary tendencies towards fission and fusion, which we have seen to be a structural principle, is evident in the institution of the feud which, on the one hand, gives expression to the hostility by occasional and violent action that serves to keep the sections apart, and, on the other hand, by the means provided for settlement, prevents opposition developing into complete fission. The tribal constitution requires both elements of a feud, the need for vengeance and the means of settlement. The means of settlement is the leopard-skin chief, whose role we shall examine later. We therefore regard the feud as essential to the political system as it exists at present. Between tribes there can only be war, and through war, the memory of war, and the potentiality of war the relations between tribes are defined and expressed. Within a tribe fighting always produces feuds, and a relation of feud is characteristic of tribal segments and gives to the tribal structure a movement of expansion and contraction.

There is, of course, no clear-cut distinction between fighting against another tribe and fighting against a segment of one's own tribe. Nuer, however, stress that the possibility of arbitration and payment of blood-wealth for deaths resulting from a fight within a tribe makes it a *ter*, feud, and that this is different from a fight between tribes, *kur*, in which no claims for compensation would be recognized. Both differ from raiding of Dinka, *pec*, and from individual duelling, *dwac*, though all fighting is *kur* in a general sense. But it is obvious that a fight in a village which at once leads to payment of compensation for deaths and a fight between tribes in which there is no compensation for deaths are two poles, and that the further we go from a village community the fights between tribal sections become more like fights between tribes in that blood-wealth is paid with increasing difficulty and infrequency, so that between primary sections the tribal value, the feeling that blood-wealth can, and even ought to, be paid, alone distinguishes their fights from fights between tribes. Here again we would emphasize the conclusion that the tribal value is relative to the structural situation.

628 182 619 We would emphasize further that blood-feuds only directly involve a few persons and that though they sometimes cause violence between whole local communities—a feud in a wider sense—ordinary social contacts continue in spite of them. The strands of kinship and affinity, of age-set affiliations, and of military and even economic interests remain unbroken; and these strands act like elastic between the sections, being capable of considerable expansion by disturbed political relations, but always pulling the communities together and keeping them as a single group in relation to other groups of the same kind. As we have explained, these strands lessen in number and strength the larger the community, but they stretch even beyond tribal frontiers. Increasing anarchy, increasing difficulty in settling feuds, goes together with lessening frequency of social contacts of all kinds. Social cohesion increases as the size of the community narrows.

VIII

671 627 There are, of course, disputes between Nuer other than those about homicides, but they can be treated briefly and in direct relation to homicide and the feud. In a strict sense Nuer have no law. There are conventional compensations for damage, adultery, loss of limb, and so forth, but there is no authority with power to adjudicate on such matters or to enforce a verdict. In Nuerland legislative, judicial, and executive functions are not invested in any persons or councils. Between members of different tribes there is no question of redress; and even within a tribe, in my experience, wrongs are not brought forward in what we would call a legal form, though compensation for damage (*ruok*) is sometimes paid. A man who considers that he has suffered loss at the hands of another cannot sue the man who has caused it, because there is no court in which to cite him, even were he willing to attend it. I lived in intimacy for a year with Nuer and never heard a case brought before an individual or a tribunal of any kind, and, furthermore, I reached
671 627 177 the conclusion that it is very rare for a man to obtain redress except by force or threat of force. The recent introduction of Government courts, before which disputes are now sometimes

settled, in no way weakens this impression, because one well 627
knows how among other African peoples cases are brought before 671
courts under Government supervision which would not previously have been settled in a court, or even settled at all, and 177
how for a long time after the institution of such Government tribunals they operate side by side with the old methods of justice.

Before discussing the chief characteristics of Nuer legal procedure I record that, according to verbal information, for I have 624
never observed the procedure, one way of settling disputes is to 627
use a leopard-skin chief as mediator. Thus, I was told that a man who has a cow stolen may ask a leopard-skin chief to go with him to request the return of the cow. The chief goes first, with several of the elders of his village, to the plaintiff's homestead, where he is given beer to drink. Later they go, with a deputation from the plaintiff's village, to the defendant's village, and here also the chief may be presented with some beer or a goat. The chief is considered to be neutral and a certain sanctity attaches to his person so that there is little likelihood of the deputation being injured. The visiting elders sit with elders of the defendant's village and the chief in one of the byres and talk about the matter in dispute. The owner of the animal gives his view and the man who has stolen it attempts to justify his action. Then the chief, and anybody else who wishes to do so, expresses an opinion on the question. When every one has had his say the chief and elders withdraw to discuss the matter among themselves and to agree upon the decision. The disputants accept the verdict of the chief and the elders and, later, the owner of the animal gives the chief a young steer or a ram unless he is a very poor man, when he gives him nothing.

If a man has a dispute with another of the same neighbourhood they may both go to the homestead of a local leopard-skin chief and lay their spears on the ground in his byre. A man would not [376]
plant his spear upright in a chief's byre, and I was told that were he to do so a bystander might appropriate it, as disrespect had thereby been shown to the chief. When both men have stated their views the chief and the elders discuss the matter outside the byre and re-enter it to acquaint the disputants of their decision. The person in whose favour the decision has been given hands his spear to the chief, who either gives it to a friend or spits on it and returns it to its owner. It was clear from the way in which my informants described the whole procedure that the chief gave his final decision as an opinion couched in persuasive language and

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

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not as a judgement delivered with authority. Moreover, whilst the sacredness of the chief and the influence of the elders carry weight, the verdict is only accepted because both parties agree to it. No discussion can be held unless both parties want the dispute settled and are prepared to compromise and submit to arbitration, the chief's role being that of mediator between persons who wish other people to get them out of a difficulty which may lead to violence. The man against whom the decision is pronounced may give way to honour the elders and the chief where he would not give way directly and without their intervention, for he does not lose prestige by accepting their verdict. If there is any doubt about the facts, certain oaths, which are in the nature of ordeals, may be employed, such as swearing statements on the chief's leopard skin.

For a dispute to be settled in this way not only is it necessary that both parties should want the matter amicably settled, but it is also necessary that they should themselves reach agreement during the discussion. No one can compel either party to accept a decision, and, indeed, a decision cannot be reached unless there is unanimity, since the elders are of both parties to the dispute. They go on talking, therefore, till every one has had his say and a consensus has been reached.

The five important elements in a settlement of this kind by direct negotiation through a chief seem to be (1) the desire of the disputants to settle their dispute, (2) the sanctity of the chief's person and his traditional role of mediator, (3) full and free discussion leading to a high measure of agreement between all present, (4) the feeling that a man can give way to the chief and elders without loss of dignity where he would not have given way to his opponent, and (5) recognition by the losing party of the justice of the other side's case.

I repeat that I have not seen this method employed and add that I am of the opinion that it is very rarely used and only when the parties are fairly close neighbours and belong to communities closely linked by many social ties. In theory any member of a tribe can obtain redress from any other, but we know of no evidence that leads us to suppose that it was often obtained. Before summing up what we judge to be the nature and scope of legal relations in Nuerland we record a few brief examples of typical acts likely to lead to violence if some reparation is not made.

When a Nuer speaks of a person having stolen (*kwal*) an animal, 426
he means that he has taken it without permission and by stealth
and by no means implies that he ought not to have taken it. 578
Within a tribe an abductor of cattle always considers that he is 685
taking what is owing to him. It is a debt (*ngwal*) which he is
settling in this way, because the man who owes him cattle has not
repaid them of his own accord. The legal issue, therefore, is
whether he is right in assuming a debt and whether he should
have taken the particular animals he took. So well is this practice
of helping yourself to what is owing to you an established habit,
that it may be said to be a customary way of settling debts. Thus
the final cattle of a homicide-payment are often seized in the
pastures, and it often happens that when a bridegroom and his
kin do not hand over all the cattle they have promised, the wife's
brothers try to seize the animals still owing to them. In other [189]
circumstances a man will steal a cow which he is owed, sometimes
employing the services of a magician to charm the owner so that
he may not guard his herd on the day the theft is planned; for
example a man who lent another an ox for sacrifice in sickness, at
his daughter's wedding, in time of famine, and so on, and has not
received a heifer in return, although the debtor possesses one.
Having seized a cow from the debtor's herd he is quite willing to
return it if he receives instead the heifer owing to him. The debtor
will then either try to steal his cow back again or he will open
a discussion which will result in his paying a heifer and receiving
back his cow.

The only quarrels within a village or camp about ownership of 602
cattle that I have witnessed have concerned obligations of kinship 578
or affinity and have eventually been settled by one party giving
way on account of his relationship to the other. If a man seizes 685
cattle from a kinsman or neighbour he walks into his kraal and
takes them. If the owner has a strong case he may resist: otherwise
he lets the cattle go, for he knows that the man will be supported
by public opinion in the community. If a man seizes cattle from
a man of a different village he adopts different tactics. With one
or two friends he watches the cattle in their grazing-ground till
a suitable opportunity occurs. I have never heard of a Nuer
stealing a cow from a fellow tribesman merely because he wanted
one. He has, on the other hand, no hesitation in stealing cows
from persons belonging to neighbouring tribes and will even go
with friends to another tribe in order to steal from them. This
theft (*kwal*) is not considered in any way wrong.

If a man commits adultery he pays an indemnity of five cows 684
and an ox, unless the man is impotent, when the adulterer can

684 claim a cow on the marriage of a female child of his adultery. Even when the husband is not impotent, if the adulterer can show that there is fruit of his adultery he can claim back the cattle he has paid as an indemnity, except for a cow known as *yang kule*, the cow of the sleeping-skin, which has ritual significance. But adultery within a small local community is probably rare because the people are all related to one another, and therefore a man considers that not only would it be wrong to commit adultery with their wives but also that it would be, in a greater or lesser degree, incestuous. If the two men are close kinsmen the adulterer provides an ox for sacrifice but is unlikely to pay an indemnity. If they are not close kinsmen the husband may try to seize the adulterer's cattle, but he only takes this step if he actually catches the offender committing adultery. The adulterer, to avoid a fight, runs away, and if he fears that his cattle may be seized he places them in the kraals of friends and kinsmen. This makes it difficult for the husband to seize them, for even if he knows where they are he does not want to involve himself in quarrels with a number of 837 his neighbours by raiding their kraals. Nuer do not consider it immoral to commit adultery with the wives of persons living in other villages. If the husband discovers the offence he may try to seize the offender's cattle, but in doing so he runs the risk of resistance and some one may get killed and a feud result. A herd is the joint property of brothers, even though it is divided among them, and they do not readily acquiesce in the loss of cattle on account of adultery. In my experience it is very seldom indeed that a man obtains compensation for adultery. Adultery with the wife of a man of another tribe is a matter of no importance. What can he do anyhow?

684 Likewise fornication with an unmarried girl is compensated by payment of a heifer and a steer. But it is most unlikely that the 836 payment will be made. If the girl's kinsmen know that she is having relations with a man who possesses cattle and is likely to marry her they turn a blind eye to the affair. If he has no cattle, or if the girl is already engaged, and one of her brothers catches him in congress with her he fights him, unless, as usually happens, the man runs away, for it is not considered cowardly to run away in these circumstances. The girl's kinsmen may then come to his kraal and, if he possesses them, take a male calf and a female calf, and if they are strong enough they may not be resisted. This is what Nuer tell one, but I have never known any one pay a male and a female calf, although after every dance I have seen the youths and maidens have paired off and there has been much promiscuous intercourse and very little effort to conceal it. It frequently

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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PLATE XVIII

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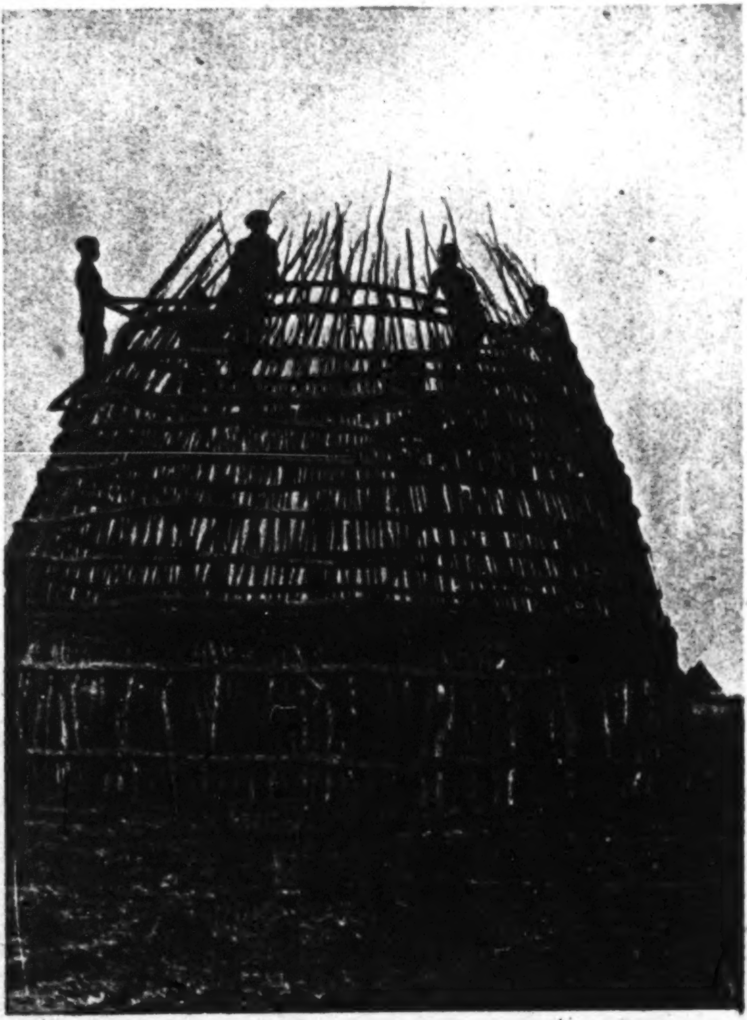

Building a cattle byre (Eastern Jikany)

[Face p. 166]

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

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happens that a man impregnates an unmarried girl and he is then expected to marry her. The girl's kinsmen may raid his kraal and seize some of his cattle, but he will try to circumvent this by hiding his beasts in the kraals of relatives and neighbours. If later he marries the girl the cattle her kinsmen have seized count as part of the bride-wealth, and if he refuses to marry her they count as payment for possession of the child, so that in either case he pays no indemnity but only a fee to establish his rights. Here again, in point of fact, it is very difficult for the girl's brothers to seize the man's cattle, unless he is willing to let them do so, and there is always the risk of a fight which may become general. [835] One does not fornicate with the girls of one's own village, for they are generally related to one, so that when an issue of the kind arises it is generally between persons of different villages of the same district. If the young man can avoid being hit over the head with a club at the time of the incident and keeps clear of the girl's village for a few months he is not likely to pay an indemnity or to suffer any other consequences. If he has put the girl in child he will, in normal circumstances, send a kinsman to say that he intends to marry her. The girl is then regarded as engaged and the young man becomes son-in-law to her parents and one does not injure one's son-in-law. Even if he refuses to marry their sister, the brothers hesitate to attack the father of her child.

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It is possible to obtain from Nuer a list of compensations for injuries to the person: e.g. ten cattle for a broken leg or skull, ten cattle for the loss of an eye, two cattle for a girl's broken teeth, &c. For a flesh wound, however serious, there is no compensation unless the man dies. In different parts of Nuerland the number of cattle to be paid in compensation varies. I have not recorded any instance of a man receiving such compensation, except from a Government court, but Nuer say that he would receive it if his kinsmen were strong enough to retaliate.

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It is alleged that, in the old days, if a man died of magic his kinsmen would try to slay the magician (*gwan wal*), though I have not recorded a case of a magician having been killed. Nuer point out that a magician does not use his magic against persons in his own community but only against persons of other villages, so that it is not easy to revenge yourself on him since he will be supported by his village who regard powerful magic as of value to their community. It is also said that in the old days a witch (*peth*) was sometimes slain, though I cannot say how often, if at all, this occurred.

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Many disputes arise about bride-wealth: the husband's people do not pay what they have promised or there is a divorce and the

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wife's people do not return all the cattle that have been paid. In such circumstances the debtor does not deny the debt but puts forward a counterbalancing claim on some account or says that he has no cattle to settle it. Often enough he says this even when he has got cattle. The claimant can only be sure of getting his due if he takes it by force from the debtor's kraal or from the herd in the grazing-grounds. If he is strong and has the backing of a powerful lineage he is not resisted, since he has right on his side. Such matters are easily settled within a village and among people who share a common dry season camp because every one realizes that some agreement must be reached by discussion and that it must accord with justice. But when the parties belong to different, and maybe hostile, villages, settlement is not so easy. The leopard-skin chief may be employed, in the manner described[x] to bring the parties together for discussion and some agreement may then be reached, but many such debts are never settled. They are remembered for years. Perhaps some day, maybe in the next generation, an opportunity will occur to steal the cattle.

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If a wife dies in her first pregnancy or childbirth the husband is held responsible. There is no question of a feud arising, but the husband loses the bride-cattle he has paid, since these now become blood-cattle for the loss of his wife. The husband is only responsible if the death occurs during childbirth before expulsion of the afterbirth. If there is any dispute about the mode of death or the number of cattle that are still owing it is settled by a mediator called *kuaa yiika* or *kuaa yiini*, 'the chief of the mats', an office which pertains to certain lineages. This man has no other office and is not an important person in virtue of his role of arbitrator in disputes of this kind. It is easy to obtain compensation, as the father-in-law has the bride-wealth in his possession. There is, moreover, a tie of affinity and neither party is likely to resort to violence.

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Using these brief notes on some exemplifications of the tendencies in Nuer law we may now state what these tendencies are. We speak of 'law' here in the sense which seems most appropriate when writing of the Nuer, a moral obligation to settle disputes by conventional methods, and not in the sense of legal procedure or of legal institutions. We speak only of civil law, for there do not seem to be any actions considered injurious to the whole community and punished by it. The informants who said that witches and magicians were sometimes killed stated that it was always individuals or groups of kin who waylaid them and killed them in vengeance.

[x] [See pp. 163-64, cat. 116 — Analyst]

The first point to note about Nuer law is that it has not 671
everywhere the same force within a tribe, but is relative to the 82
position of persons in social structure, to the distance between
them in the kinship, lineage, age-set, and, above all, in the 627
political, systems. In theory one can obtain redress from any member of one's tribe, but, in fact, there is little chance of doing so when he is not a member of one's district and a kinsman. The wider the area which contains the parties to a dispute the weaker the feeling of obligation to settle it and the more difficult the task of enforcing settlement, and, consequently, the less the likelihood of it being settled. Within a village differences between persons are discussed by the elders of the village and agreement is generally and easily reached and compensation paid, or promised, for all are related by kinship and common interests. Disputes between members of nearby villages, between which there are many social contacts and ties, can also be settled by agreement, but less easily and with more likelihood of resort to force. The nearer we get to the tribe the less the chances of settlement. Law operates weakly outside a very limited radius and nowhere very effectively. The lack of social control to which we have often referred is thus shown in the weakness of law, and the structural interrelations of tribal segments are seen in the relativity of law, for Nuer law is relative like the structure itself.

A cogent reason why there is little chance of redress between 627
members of different secondary and primary tribal sections is that the basis of law is force. We must not be mislead by an enumeration of traditional payments for damage into supposing that it is easy to exact them unless a man is prepared to use force. The club and the spear are the sanctions of rights. What chiefly makes people pay compensation is fear that the injured man and his kin may take to violence. It follows that a member of a strong lineage is in a different position from that of a member of a weak lineage. Also the chances of a man obtaining redress for an injury are less the further removed he is from the man who has injured him, since the opportunity for violence and the effectiveness of kinship backing lessen the wider the distance between the principals. Since self-help, with some backing of public opinion, is the main sanction it is only operative when

627 people are within easy striking distance of one another. This is one of the main reasons why it is difficult to settle feuds when the parties belong to different primary or secondary tribal sections.

Most disputes occur in villages or camps and between persons of nearby villages, since people who live close to one another have more opportunities for dispute than those who live far from one another. Such quarrels are usually complicated by notions of kinship, affinity, age, and so forth and are very often the result of breaches of specific patterns of social behaviour rather than simple breaches of general social regulations. They are, therefore, generally settled in harmony with these traditional patterns. But, if they are not settled by the mediation of kinsmen, they are likely to lead to violence, because, as we have remarked, Nuer are at once prepared to fight if they are wronged or insulted, unless kinship, or great disparity in age, restrains them. If a man refuses to pay compensation for a wrong, there-

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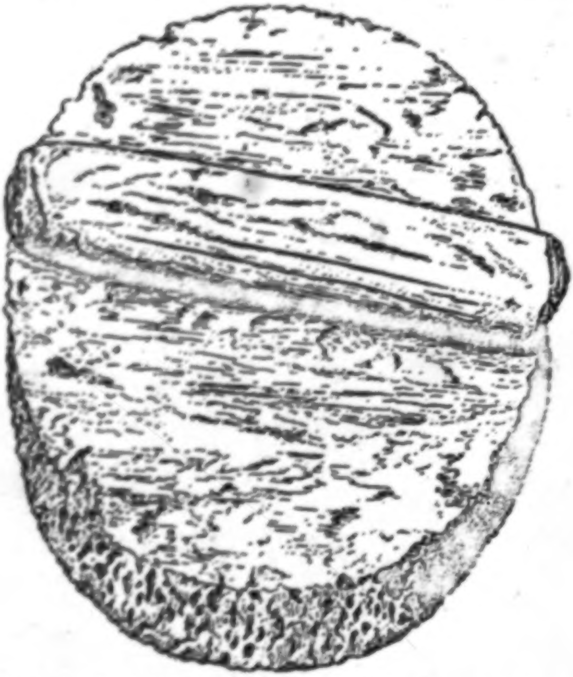

FIG. 12. Baked-mud grindstone with wooden grinder.

fore, he runs a great risk of his skull being cracked with a club, and even of being speared if excitement runs high. And this is what often happens. 627

For this reason we have said that Nuer law, in so far as it applies to a study of political relations, must be treated in connexion with the blood-feud. Disputes can often be settled on account of close kinship and other social ties, but between tribesmen as such they are either settled by the aggrieved party using force, and this may result in homicide and blood-feud, or by the debtor giving way in the knowledge that force may be used and a feud result. It is the knowledge that a Nuer is brave and will stand up against aggression and enforce his rights by club and spear that ensures respect for person and property. 627 628

The Nuer has a keen sense of personal dignity and rights. The notion of right, *cuong*, is strong. It is recognized that a man ought to obtain redress for certain wrongs. This is not a contradiction of the statement that threat of violence is the main sanction for payment of compensation, but is in accord with it, for a man's kinsmen will only support him if he is right. It is doubtless true that if a man is weak it is unlikely that his being in the right will enable him to obtain satisfaction, but if he is in the right he will have the support of his kin and his opponent will not, and to resort to violence or to meet it the support of one's kin and the approval of one's community are necessary. One may say that if a man has right on his side and, in virtue of that, the support of his kinsmen and they are prepared to use force, he stands a good chance of obtaining what is due to him, so long as the parties to the dispute live near one another. 577 627

When we speak of a man being in the right we do not suggest that disputes are mostly a clear issue between right and wrong. Indeed, it would be correct to say that, usually, both parties are to some extent right and that the only question which arises is, Who has the greater right? To state the matter in a different way: a Nuer dispute is usually a balance of wrongs, for a man does not, except in sexual matters, wantonly commit an act of aggression. He does not steal a man's cow, club him, or withhold his bride-cattle in divorce, unless he has some score to settle. Consequently it is very rare for a man to deny the

577 627 damage he has caused. He seeks to justify it, so that a settlement is an adjustment between rival claims. I have been told by an officer with wide experience of Africans that Nuer defendants are remarkable in that they very seldom lie in cases brought before Government tribunals. They have no need to, since they are only anxious to justify the damage they have caused by showing that it is retaliation for damage the plaintiff has inflicted earlier.

IX

624 Feuds are settled through the leopard-skin chief and he plays a minor role in the settlement of disputes other than homicide. It might be supposed that this functionary has a position of great authority, but this is not so. Indeed, on the same grounds as we have said that the Nuer have no law we might say that they also have no government. We devote a few lines to stating what are the ritual qualifications of the leopard-skin chief and then assess the part he plays in feuds and quarrels.

The few references in the writings of early travellers about Nuer leaders do not suggest that they were persons of very great authority.[1] The absence of any persons with sufficient authority or, except for a few prophets, with sufficient influence through whom an administrative system might be built up is stated in very direct terms by the earliest British officers to enter Nuerland.[2] The 'sheikhs' described in these early reports as lacking authority are probably the persons who were later known
624 789 among Europeans as leopard-skin chiefs. A leopard-skin chief, ***kuaar muon***, has a sacred association with the earth (***mun***) which gives him certain ritual powers in relation to it, including the power to bless or curse. However, lest it be supposed that the power to utter curses enables a chief to wield great authority I at once record that I have never observed a chief exercise this power. There are stories which recount the dire effects of a curse, but I think that as a rule a chief only ventures to threaten to utter one when he is officiating in a ritual capacity in the settlement of feuds, on which occasions he is expected to do so, the

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[1] Werne, op. cit., p. 207; Poncet, op. cit., p. 40; Brun-Rollet, op. cit., p. 222. Brun-Rollet's account is unacceptable.

[2] *Kaimakam G. Hawkes, S.I.R.*, no. 98, 1902; *Bimbashi H. Gordon, S.I.R.*, no. 107, 1903.

threat forming part of the proceedings. Certainly to-day chiefs 624
have no authority in virtue of their power of cursing. He is also 789
known as *kuaar twac* because he alone wears a leopard-skin (*twac*) across his shoulders. A chief may be seen wearing one in Mr. Corfield's photograph on Plate XXIV. The word *kuaar* has ritual associations in all the Nilotic languages, but, without discussing further what word might best define its scope of reference in Nuer, we intend to refer to the person in this account, as we have done heretofore, as a chief, with the caution that we do not thereby imply that he has any secular authority, for we hold that his public acts are mainly ritual.

Nevertheless, his function is political, for relations between 624
political groups are regulated through him, though he is not
a political authority controlling them. His activities are 628
chiefly concerned with settlement of blood-feuds, for a feud cannot be settled without his intervention, and his political significance lies in this fact. Chiefs sometimes prevent fights between communities by running between the two lines of combatants and hoeing up the earth here and there. The older men then try to restrain the youths and obtain a settlement of the dispute by discussion. However, we think that a fight can only be prevented in this way when the disputants are close neighbours and anxious not to kill one another.

Besides the part they play in feuds, chiefs perform ritual to cleanse parties to incestuous congress, and they possess slight rain-making powers, though Nuer do not attach much importance to the art. On the whole we may say that Nuer chiefs are sacred persons, but that their sacredness gives them no general authority outside specific social situations. I have never seen Nuer treat a chief with more respect than they treat other people or speak of them as persons of much importance. They regard them as agents through whom disputes of a certain kind can be settled and defilement of a certain kind can be effaced, and I have often heard remarks such as this: 'We took hold of them and gave them leopard skins and made them our chiefs to do the talking at sacrifices for homicide.' Their ritual sphere seldom extends beyond a tribal section.

Only certain lineages are chiefs and only some men of these 624
lineages practise as such. It is, perhaps, significant that in many 613

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parts of Nuerland, including most of the area with which I am acquainted, chiefs do not belong to the dominant clans in the tribes in which they function, though some of them are said to be aristocrats in parts of Eastern Gaajak, Gaawar, and Leek. Most of those whose clans I know belong to the GAATLEAK and JIMEM clans which nowhere have aristocratic status. Since quarrels between tribal sections are expressed in terms of lineages of the dominant clan associated with the sections, as will be explained in the following chapter, the chief, having no position in the system of dominant lineages, is thereby more fitted to mediate between them. He is not a member of the hereditary owners of the tribal land, but is a stranger living there. A chief may act as such in whatever tribe he resides in. If a chief is killed the ceremonies connected with payment of compensation are performed by an aristocrat of the tribe. This is probably because, even when the chiefs of an area are not all members of one clan, they are believed to have a kind of kinship through their common badge of the leopard skin and cannot marry into one another's families. We regard chiefs as a category of ritual experts and do not consider that they comprise in any way a class or rank. We believe their social function to be a mechanism by which the equilibrium of the political system is maintained through the institution of the feud. The slight authority of chiefs and, in many parts, their position outside the dominant clan, accord with this view.

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In taking the view that to regard the leopard-skin chief as a political agent or a judicial authority is to misunderstand the constitution of Nuer society and to be blind to its fundamental principles, we have to account for the part he plays in the settlement of feuds. We have stated that he has no judicial or executive authority. It is not his duty to decide on the merits of a case of homicide. It would never occur to Nuer that a judgement of any kind was required. Likewise he has no means of compelling people to pay or to accept blood-cattle. He has no powerful kinsmen or the backing of a populous community to support him. He is simply a mediator in a specific social situation and his mediation is only successful because community ties are acknowledged by both parties and because they wish to avoid, for the time being at any rate, further hostilities.

624 628 Only if both parties want the affair settled can the chief intervene successfully. He is the machinery which enables groups to bring about a normal state of affairs when they desire to achieve this end.

It is true that a leopard-skin chief has always in these circumstances to persuade, by exhortations and threats, the kinsmen of the dead man to accept compensation, but this pressure must not be regarded as a command. It is quite clear from many Nuer statements on the matter that the chief's threats are encouraged to their furthest point in order that by yielding to his persuasion the kinsmen of the dead man may not dishonour themselves by neglecting to exact a life for the life of their kinsman.

> 624 628 789 A chief's threats might go no further than saying that if the kinsmen would not listen to him neither would he, when they were in a similar difficulty, listen to them. But I was told that were the people to refuse mediation with undue obstinacy the chief might threaten to leave their homestead and to curse them. He would take an ox and rub its back with ashes and begin to address it, saying that if the injured party were to insist on revenge many of them would be killed in the endeavour and they would throw spears vainly at their enemies. I was told that he would then raise his spear to slaughter the animal, but this would be as far as people would care to let him go. Having asserted their pride of kin, one of the dead man's family would seize his upraised arm to prevent him from stabbing the ox, saying: 'No! Do not kill your ox. It is finished. We will accept compensation.' My informant, whose statements were supported by others, further added that if people were to insist on refusing the mediation of a leopard-skin chief he would take a short-horned ox and, after invoking God, slay it and rub the hairs off its head so that the members of the lineage who rejected his mediation might perish in prosecuting their feud.

We conclude, therefore, that a chief's curse is not in itself the real sanction of settlement, but is a conventional, ritual, operation in the settlement of feuds, which is known to every one in advance and is allowed for in their calculations. The threat of it is compelled by those on whom it would fall were it uttered. These affairs are like a game in which everybody knows the 624
rules and the stages of development: when one is expected to 628
give way, when to be firm, when to yield at the last moment,

624 628 and so forth. This conclusion is based on many statements (I have only once been present at discussions between a chief and the kinsmen of a slain man, and then the circumstances were unusual). It may, however, be said with certainty that no amount of pressure from a leopard-skin chief, if it is ever exerted, can settle feuds expeditiously, if at all, between the larger tribal sections. In other disputes the chief acts rarely, and only when both sides strongly desire settlement. He has no jurisdiction to hear cases in a locality. Here, again, I was told that if one party refused to accept his decision as arbiter he might pass the man his leopard-skin, an action tantamount to a curse. The man must then make the chief a gift before he will consent to take back the skin. However, this probably happens only when a man refuses to accept a decision to which every one else, including his own elders, have agreed. I was also told that in disputing a chief's words a man will do so respectfully, first spitting into the chief's hands as a sign of goodwill. No doubt a chief is shown respect on such occasions, but the chiefs I have seen were treated in everyday life like other men and there is no means of telling that a man is a chief by observing people's behaviour to him. His role in disputes may be regarded as a means by which neighbours, who wish a difficulty settled without resort to force and who acknowledge that the other side have a good case, can negotiate.

X

554 We have considered the position of the leopard-skin chief at some length because it is structurally important. He in no way represents or symbolizes the unity and exclusiveness of political groups, but is a mechanism by which, through the institution of the feud, these groups interact and maintain their structural distance. There are other people in Nuerland with ritual powers, of one kind or another, which sometimes make a man well known and, occasionally, very influential, but none of them are politically important, except the prophets whose activities we discuss later. They neither govern nor judge and their sacred functions are not, like those of the leopard-skin chief, specifically related to the interaction of local groups. However, we do not entirely

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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PLATE XIX

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a. Cattle camp (Leek)

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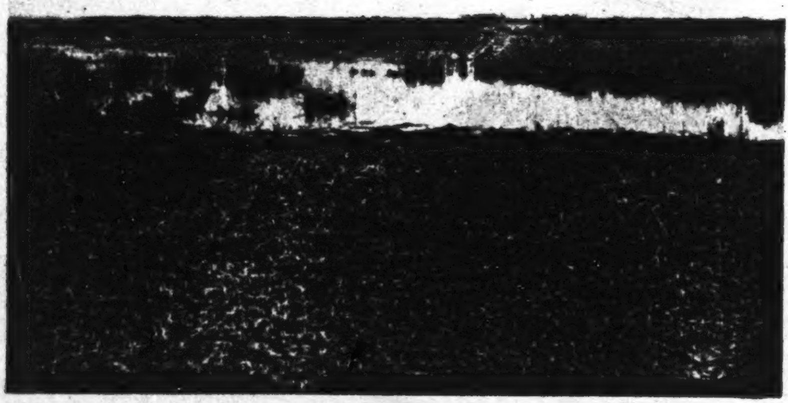

b. Typical swampy depression in November (Western Jikany)

[Face p. 176]

554 pass them by because sacred powers often give a man prestige from which he may attain local eminence as an important elder, if they are combined with wealth, ability, and wide kinship connexions.

Next to prophets and leopard-skin chiefs the ritual status that
554 carries with it most prestige is that of the *wut ghok*, the Man of the
613 Cattle. Certain lineages have hereditary ritual powers in rela-
231 tion to cattle and are asked to cure sick beasts and to make barren
cows fruitful, though only some members of these lineages use
791 their powers. Like leopard-skin chiefs, Men of the Cattle are often members of stranger lineages and not of the aristocratic clan of their tribe. I was told that their curse is feared, as it can be directed to the cattle, and that Nuer do not care to offend them, but, outside tradition, I have not recorded any occasion of its utterance. Apart from the few Men of the Cattle who play a part in the regulation of Age-sets (see Chap. VI), and those who are sometimes consulted about migration to new pastures, they have no public functions. One *wut ghok* of the Eastern Gaajok became very rich and powerful a generation ago, but his prestige was largely due to his possession of magic.

Besides the *kuaa muon*, who has a ritual relationship to the earth,
554 and the *wut ghok*, who has a ritual relationship to the cattle, there
613 are a number of totemic specialists whose ritual connexion with
791 lions, crocodiles, weaver birds, &c., enables them to influence the behaviour of these creatures. A totemic specialist is a possessor (*gwan*) of the spirit (*kwoth*) of his totem. Totemic specialists have no political significance and have no social influence in virtue of their powers alone. There is a war specialist whose duty it is to shake a spear in the face of the enemy and to deliver an invocation against them. He is known as *gwan muot*, possessor of the spear, or *ngul*, and is often, perhaps always, a member of a senior lineage of the dominant clan of the tribe, for he invokes the spear by the spear-name of the clan. There are also magicians of various kinds: leeches, diviners, owners of medicines, and owners of fetishes. Of these specialists only owners of fetishes become prominent members of their communities on account of their ritual powers. Nuer
[776] are very much afraid of fetish spirits and believe them to be so powerful that they will even purchase them with cattle. A fetish-owner may become the most influential man in the village, and I have been surprised at the respect and fear with which his neighbours sometimes treat him. Nevertheless, he has no defined authority in controlling the relations of the villagers to one another nor does he represent the village in its relations with neighbouring communities.

XI

554 562 593 Ritual status gives a man vague influence in his locality; but authority only in specific ritual situations. Sex and age are two, more general, conditioning attributes of local influence. Women and children have always a position inferior to that of men. Women occasionally gain a reputation as prophets and magicians but, as a rule, they play no leading part in public affairs. Among the Nuer, relations between the sexes, and between man and wife, are more equitable and give females more privilege than in any other tribe I have visited in the Southern Sudan. Nevertheless, they are subject to men: daughters to their fathers and wives to their husbands. Boys are under the command of their parents and elder brothers and only become full tribesmen, with the privileges and responsibilities of such, at initiation. The relations between the sexes and between children and adults belong rather to an account of domestic relations than to a study of political institutions.

561 623 When a lad has passed through initiation he becomes 'a man' and when he has married and begotten several children he becomes 'a true man', what we have called an elder. We have from time to time spoken of the part played by elders in homicides and other disputes. When a local community acts corporately and leadership and advice are required, these functions rest with the elders. They decide when seasonal moves are to be made and where camps are to be formed, negotiate marriages, advise on questions of exogamy, perform sacrifices, and so forth. Their opinions on such matters are readily accepted by the younger men, who take little part in the talk unless they are directly concerned in the issue. When the elders disagree there is much shouting and argument, for every one who wishes to speak does so and as often and loud as he pleases. The words of some elders count for more than the words of others and one easily observes that their opinions are usually agreed to.

561 These elders are members of central age-sets, at the present time the *Maker* and *Dangunga*, for members of the most senior sets, the *Thut* and *Boiloc*, take little part in public life. We discuss in Chapter VI the relations between age-sets. Here we

remark only that there is no constituted authority within each 561 set, all members being of equal status, and that, whilst members of junior sets respect those of senior sets, the authority of older men is personal, very indefinite, and based on analogy with domestic relations within the family. Behaviour between individuals is influenced by the distance between them in the age-set system, but age-sets are not a political institution in the sense of the system having an administrative, military, or judicial organization.

Age by itself does not give a man social position. He must 554 have other qualifications as well. Those elders with most influence are the *gaat twot*, the children of bulls. Such a man is called a *tut*, bull, and in strict usage this is equivalent to *dil*, tribal aristocrat. As will be fully explained in Chapter V a *dil* is a member of the dominant clan in each tribe and, in virtue of his membership, has within that tribe a slightly superior social position. This clan is not a ruling class and the enhanced prestige of its members is very indefinite. The clan system has [614] no hereditary leadership; a senior lineage does not rank higher than others; there is no 'father of the clan'; and there is no 'council of clan elders'. *Tut* is also used in a wider sense to refer to men of social position who do not belong to the dominant clan but to other lineages which have long been domiciled in the tribe. A *tut* in this rather wide sense of 'man of good standing', or 'social leader', is usually a scion of an important lineage, the head of his own family, and master of his homestead and herd. He is generally also the eldest surviving son of his father's family and, therefore, head also of the joint family, the master of the hamlet. If he is to gain a social reputation he must also possess sufficient cows to be able to entertain guests and to attract young kinsmen to reside in his byre. Round such a man's homestead are clustered the homesteads of his brothers and married sons and, often enough, the homesteads of his sisters' husbands and daughters' husbands. To be a social leader, whose opinion is readily agreed to, he must also be a man of character and ability.

The authority of a *gat twot*, or *tut wec*, 'bull of the camp', as he is often called, is never formalized. He has no defined status, powers, or sphere of leadership. Lineage, age, seniority in the

554 family, many children, marriage alliances, wealth in cattle, prowess as a warrior, oratorical skill, character, and often ritual powers of some kind, all combine in producing an outstanding social personality who is regarded as head of a joint family and of a cluster of cognatic kinsmen and affines, as a leader in village and camp, and a person of importance in the rather vague social sphere we call a district. It is easy to see in village or camp who are its social leaders, and it is these people who have furnished the administration with most government chiefs, for the influence of the leopard-skin chief is mainly restricted to the circuit of his ritual functions and only if he is also a *gat twot* does he exercise influence beyond these limits.

554 596 When we ask, however, in what way a *tut* acts as a leader in his community it is difficult to answer. As the chief man of his family and joint family he takes the most prominent part in settling the affairs of these groups, but he cannot on that account be said to have political authority, for these domestic groups act independently of others in the village, though some co-ordination between them is imposed by their common requirements. A joint family decide on the advice of their *tut* to change camp and the *tut* is supposed to drive in the first tethering peg in the new camp, if he is present, but other joint families of the same camp may decide not to move till another day. 554 621 Leadership in a local community consists of an influential man deciding to do something and the people of other hamlets following suit at their convenience. When villagers co-operate, there is no appointed leader to organize their activity. If some members of a village are attacked the others rush to their assistance, headed by the swiftest and bravest, but there is no one who calls on them to do so or who organizes their resistance. A village is a political unit in a structural sense, but it has no political organization. There is no headman or other appointed leader invested with authority who symbolizes its unity and no village council. Beyond his domestic groups a *tut* has authority in his village only in the sense that he takes a prominent part in questions of procedure and other discussions. Outside his village he is a well-known person who is generally respected in his district, but he has no political status.

800 In larger groups than a village and camp there is far less

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

In larger groups than a village and camp there is far less

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co-ordination of activities and less scope for leadership. Only in war is there any lengthy direct co-operation. Men noted for their prowess and ability stir up among the youths enthusiasm for a raid against the Dinka or a fight against another tribal section, and direct what simple tactics are employed, but these men have no political status or permanent leadership. The warriors mobilize in local divisions of their own accord, for there are no regiments and companies under officers, and in fighting they follow the most forward and courageous among them. Some of these warriors become renowned and their reputation quickly attracts recruits for raids. Two of the most famous war leaders were Latjor who led the Jikany tribes, and Bidiit who led the Lou, eastwards. Neither had any ritual qualifications, but both were men of outstanding ability who were members of the dominant clans of their tribes. It is not said by Nuer that either established any political control, or even had great authority, in their tribes. The role of prophets in war is examined later. Between tribal segments there are no other joint activities that require organization and direction.

XII

The lack of governmental organs among the Nuer, the absence of legal institutions, of developed leadership, and, generally, of organized political life is remarkable. Their state is an acephalous kinship state and it is only by a study of the kinship system that it can be well understood how order is maintained and social relations over wide areas are established and kept up. The ordered anarchy in which they live accords well with their character, for it is impossible to live among Nuer and conceive of rulers ruling over them. 181 156

The Nuer is a product of hard and egalitarian upbringing, is deeply democratic, and is easily roused to violence. His turbulent spirit finds any restraint irksome and no man recognizes a superior. Wealth makes no difference. A man with many cattle is envied, but not treated differently from a man with few cattle. Birth makes no difference. A man may not be a member of the dominant clan of his tribe, he may even be of Dinka descent, but were another to allude to the fact he would run a grave risk of being clubbed.

156 That every Nuer considers himself as good as his neighbour is
evident in their every movement. They strut about like lords of
181 the earth, which, indeed, they consider themselves to be. There
is no master and no servant in their society, but only equals who
[186] regard themselves as God's noblest creation. Their respect for
one another contrasts with their contempt for all other peoples.
Among themselves even the suspicion of an order riles a man and
he either does not carry it out or he carries it out in a casual and
dilatory manner that is more insulting than a refusal. When a
[576] Nuer wants his fellows to do something he asks it as a favour to
a kinsman, saying, 'Son of my mother, do so-and-so', or he includes
himself in the command and says: 'Let us depart', 'Let the people
return home', and so forth. In his daily relations with his fellows
a man shows respect to his elders, to his 'fathers', and to certain
persons of ritual status, within the circuit of its reference, so long
as they do not infringe on his independence, but he will not submit
to any authority which clashes with his own interests and he does
not consider himself bound to obey any one. I was once discussing
the Shilluk with a Nuer who had visited their country, and he
remarked, 'They have one big chief, but we have not. This chief
can send for a man and demand a cow or he can cut a man's throat.
Whoever saw a Nuer do such a thing? What Nuer ever came
when some one sent for him or paid any one a cow?'

181 I found Nuer pride an increasing source of amazement. It is
as remarkable as their constant aloofness and reticence. I have
689 already described how Nuer would interrupt my inquiries. I
mention here three incidents typical of the cavalier way in which
they treated me. On one occasion I asked the way to a certain
place and was deliberately deceived. I returned in chagrin to
camp and asked the people why they had told me the wrong way.
One of them replied, 'You are a foreigner, why should we tell you
the right way? Even if a Nuer who was a stranger asked us the
way we should say to him, "You continue straight along that path",
but we would not tell him that the path forked. Why should we
tell him? But you are now a member of our camp and you are
kind to our children, so we will tell you the right way in future.'

In this same camp, at the end of my stay, when I was sick and
576 being removed by steamer, I asked the people to carry my tent
and belongings to the river's edge. They refused, and my servant,
a Nuer youth, and I had to do it ourselves. When I asked him
why the people were churlish, he replied, 'You told them to carry
your belongings to the river. That is why they refused. If you had
asked them, saying, "My mother's sons, assist me", they would
not have refused.'

On one occasion some men gave me information about their 609 lineages. Next day these same men paid me a visit and one of them asked me, 'What we told you yesterday, did you believe it?' When I replied that I had believed it they roared with laughter and called to others to come and share the joke. Then one of them said, 'Listen, what we told you yesterday was all nonsense. Now we will tell you correctly.' I could relate many such stories.

The Nuer have been rightly described as dour, and they are 689 often gruff and curt to one another and especially to strangers. But if they are approached without a suggestion of superiority they 181 do not decline friendship, and in misfortune and sickness they show themselves kind and gentle. At such moments they permit themselves to show sympathy which their pride stifles at other times, for even when Nuer approve of one they cannot bear that one shall see it and are the more truculent to hide their friendliness. Never are they truckling or sycophantic. When a Nuer wants a gift he asks for it straight out, and if you refuse it he remains in good humour. Their only test of character is whether one can stand up for oneself. One rises in Nuer estimation the more one lives their kind of life and accepts their values.

If you wish to live among the Nuer you must do so on their 181 terms, which means that you must treat them as a kind of kinsmen and they will then treat you as a kind of kinsman. Rights, 602 privileges, and obligations are determined by kinship. Either a man is a kinsman, actually or by fiction, or he is a person to whom you have no reciprocal obligations and whom you treat as a potential enemy. Every one in a man's village and district counts in one way or another as a kinsman, if only by linguistic assimilation, so that, except for an occasional homeless and despised wanderer, a Nuer only associates with people whose behaviour to him is on a kinship pattern.

Kinsmen must assist one another, and if one has a surplus of a 181 good thing he must share it with his neighbours. Consequently no Nuer ever has a surplus. But the European has a surplus and 682 if his possessions are of any use to the Nuer he ought, in their 431 opinion, to share them with the people among whom he is living. Travellers have often remarked that the Nuer have plagued them for gifts. They beg from one another with equal persistence. No Nuer is expected to part with his cattle or household property and, except in special circumstances, these would not be asked for. But were a man to possess several spears or hoes or other such objects he would inevitably lose them. Deng, a Government chief and a man of standing, told me, as I was leaving his village on the Pibor River, that he was grateful for the fishing spears I had distributed

181 602 431 among his kinsmen, but added that they would not be able to keep them when his relatives at Fadoi came to spend next dry season on the Pibor.

The only way of keeping tobacco among the Nuer is to deny that one possesses it and to keep it well hidden. When I gave Deng a big lump of Anuak tobacco he managed to place a small piece of it in his pipe, but he had at once to distribute the rest of it. When I used to give tobacco to youths at Yakwac they generally took a small piece for immediate use as snuff and asked me to hide the rest, so that they could come and get a bit when they wanted it without any one knowing that they possessed it. I had hiding-places all over my tent. No Nuer can resist the pleadings of his kinsman for tobacco. Age-fellows do not even ask for snuff or tobacco, but, if they find it in a man's byre, they just take it. My own system was to give away at the first opportunity anything I possessed which Nuer might covet and to rest in poverty and peace. Arab merchants are driven almost crazy by Nuer demands for gifts, but they generally speak Nuer well and have considerable knowledge of Nuer habits and so are able to hold their own. Nevertheless I have often observed that they make gifts where no return is to be expected.

Nuer are most tenacious of their rights and possessions. They take easily but give with difficulty. This selfishness arises from their education and from the nature of kinship obligations. A child soon learns that to maintain his equality with his peers he must stand up for himself against any encroachment on his person and property. This means that he must always be prepared to fight, and his willingness and ability to do so are the only protection of his integrity as a free and independent person against the avarice and bullying of his kinsmen. They protect him against outsiders, but he must resist their demands on himself. The demands made on a man in the name of kinship are incessant and imperious and he resists them to the utmost.

XIII

791 554 Some personal recollections and general impressions were recorded in the last section in order that it might be understood what are Nuer feelings about authority. It is the more remarkable that they so easily submit to persons who claim certain supernatural powers. Fetishes are a recent introduction to Nuerland and they inspire much apprehension among the people, so that, in recent years, their owners have often won prestige in their villages and made themselves feared in their

districts, and occasionally even in large tribal sections. These 791 fetish owners are not, however, in any sense tribal leaders and 554 cannot compare in social importance with the prophets.

Owing to the fact that Nuer prophets had been the foci of 792 opposition to the Government they were in disgrace and the more influential of them under restraint or in hiding during my visits to Nuerland, so that I was not able to make detailed observations on their behaviour.[1] Without discussing Nuer religious categories it may be said that a prophet is a man who is possessed by one of the sky-spirits, or Gods, whom Nuer regard as sons of the Sky-god. Nuer have great respect for these spirits and fear, and readily follow, those whom they possess. Prophets, consequently, achieved greater sanctity and wider influence than any other persons in Nuer society. A prophet is known as *guk* and is sometimes referred to as *cok kwoth*, an ant of God. He also comes into the general category of *gwan kwoth*, possessor of a spirit.

The first prophet to have gained great influence appears to have been Ngundeng who died in 1906. He was a Lou tribesman of the GAATLEAK clan and an immigrant from the Eastern Jikany. He had practised as a leopard-skin chief before he had acquired a reputation as a prophet by prolonged fasts and other erratic behaviour, by his skill in curing barrenness and sickness, and by his prophecies. Women came to him to be made fruitful from all over Lou, from the Eastern Jikany tribes, and even from the west of the Zeraf and Nile. Many brought oxen which Ngundeng sacrificed to Deng, the Sky-god which possessed him. He then anointed them with his spittle. When small-pox threatened the Lou he went out to meet it and to stay its advance by sacrifice of oxen. He foretold cattle epidemics and other events and led expeditions against the Dinka.

When Ngundeng died, the spirit of Deng eventually entered his son Gwek, who began to prophesy and to cure barrenness and sickness, as his father had done. However, he never displayed the pathological qualities of his father, who appears to have been a genuine psychotic. The spirit of Deng had passed over his elder brothers, or did not long reside in them. Nuer say that a spirit eventually returns to the lineage of the man whom it first

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[1] The Government has always looked askance at prophets and opposed their influence. See, for some pejorative references to them, Jackson, op. cit., pp. 90–1; Fergusson, Appendix to Jackson, p. 107; C. A. Willis, 'The Cult of Deng', *S.N. and R.*, vol. xi, 1928, p. 200.

792 possessed, even if a generation or two later, and the chosen vessel
generally becomes aware of its entry by experiencing severe sickness
with delirium. Ordinary Nuer, particularly if they are young,
do not want to be possessed, and it seems that it is often an
abnormal person who is possessed in the first place, while it is the
most ambitious of his sons on whom his mantle falls, for he would
seem to welcome possession, although not undergoing fasts to
procure it. Gwek was killed by Government forces in 1928.
Another famous prophet, Diu or Dengleaka, of the Gaawar tribe,
was a captured Dinka who set about to acquire a spirit by fasting
and solitude. He later achieved fame and power by successful
campaigns against the Dinka, whose country his followers occupied,
and against Arab slavers. Like Ngundeng he had a reputation
for performing miracles. Dengleaka died in 1908 and his son
Dwal became possessed with the spirit of the Sky-god, Diu. He
is at present a political prisoner. The only prophet I have met,
Buom, of Dok country, was possessed by the spirit of a Sky-god,
Teeny. He was regarded as selfish and greedy by his neighbours,
having been cunning enough to get himself accepted as a Government
chief. He showed too great ambition, however, and is now
in exile. Well-known prophets, in other parts of Nuerland, were Mut
of the Eastern Gaajak, Kulang in Western Nuerland, and others.

Brief reference must be made to the very remarkable pyramid
792 erected by Ngundeng, and added to by Gwek, in the Rumjok
section of the Lou tribe. It was fifty to sixty feet high with large
778 elephant tusks planted round the base and at the summit. Dr.
Crispin's photograph on Plate XXV, taken in 1901, shows the
pallisade of ivory tusks, the type of material of which it was
constructed, and weathering, due to rains, round the base. It was
blown up by Government forces in 1928. The material used in
construction consisted of ashes, earth, and debris excavated from
sites of cattle camps. People came from all over Lou and the
Eastern Jikany tribes, bringing oxen with them for sacrifice, to
assist in the building. Nuer say that it was built in honour of the
Sky-god Deng and for the glory of his prophet Ngundeng. There
[177] is no doubt that the cult of Deng was of Dinka origin and probably
the idea of a mound came from the same source. Besides the
famous Lou pyramid there is said to be a smaller one at Thoc in
Eastern Jikany country, built by a prophet called Deng, son of Dul.

Nuer are unanimous in stating that these prophets are a
792 recent development. They say that Deng descended from the
sky in recent times—within living memory, in fact—and that
he was the first, or almost the first, of the Sky-gods to come to

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Cattle travelling (Lou)

[Face p. 186]

792 earth. They state that in the old days there were no prophets; only the ritual officials mentioned earlier. The records of European travellers are not explicit enough to confirm or reject this statement. Poncet says that among the Nuer in his day were rich and important persons, honoured after their death, whom he calls *devins ou sorciers* and *jongleurs*,[1] and Brun-Rollet says that the Nuer had a kind of pope for whom they had veneration akin to worship, but his account is too fanciful to carry weight.[2] Whilst it is difficult to believe that there were

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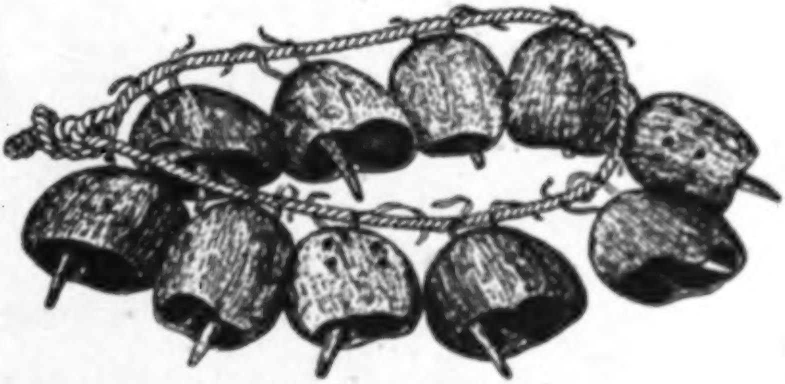

FIG. 13. Calf's bell-necklace of palm nuts.

no cases of possession sixty years ago we must, in the absence of conflicting evidence, accept so unanimous a declaration by Nuer that there was no possession by Sky-gods, and it seems fairly certain that if there were any prophets at that time their influence was restricted to small localities and had not the tribal [177] significance of more recent times. There is some evidence that the development of Nuer prophets was related to the spread of Mahdism from the Northern Sudan. However that may be, there is no doubt that powerful prophets arose about the time when Arab intrusion into Nuerland was at its height and that after the reconquest of the Sudan they were more respected and had more influence than any other persons in Nuerland.

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619 Nevertheless, we consider that the power of these prophets, even of the most successful ones, has been exaggerated and that

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[1] Poncet, op. cit., p. 40.

[2] Brun-Rollet, op. cit., p. 222.

792 619 their tribal position has been misunderstood. The earliest Government officials to enter Lou country have recorded that Ngundeng was greatly feared and respected and were of the opinion that if the Lou were to be administered he would have either to be reconciled or removed. However, his son, Gwek, was not supported against the Government by some sections of the tribe. Mr. Struvé, then Governor of the Upper Nile Province, reported that Dwal, son of Diu, had 'rather shaky authority' among the Gaawar. I received the impression in 1932 that Buom had far more power in Dok country as a government chief than he ever had in pre-government days as a prophet. A prophet's curse is feared, but armed intervention of Government forces is a weightier sanction. Buom was attempting to exercise unprecedented judicial functions and his banishment met with no popular hostility and with little regret. There is no good evidence that the earlier prophets were more than spiritual persons, whose ritual powers were used particularly in warfare, though some of the later ones appear to have begun to settle disputes, at any rate in their own villages and districts. Of them all, perhaps Gwek came nearest to exercising political functions and to imposing his authority outside his own district, but the hostility between tribes and between tribal segments rendered effective personal control impossible.

792 721 619 The only activities of prophets which can truly be called tribal were their initiation of raids against the Dinka and their rallying of opposition to Arab and European aggression, and it is in these actions that we see their structural significance and account for their emergence and the growth of their influence. All the important prophets about whom we have information gained their prestige by directing successful raids on the Dinka, for these raids were carried out in the names of the spirits which promised rich booty by their lips. No extensive raids were undertaken without the permission and guidance of prophets, who received instructions from the Sky-gods in dreams and trances about the time and objective of attack, and often they accompanied them in person and performed sacrifices before battle. They took for themselves part of the spoil and to some extent supervised the division of the rest of it. The warriors sang war hymns to the Sky-gods before starting on raids and the

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sacrifices to them by their prophets were believed to ensure 721
booty and safety. 619

For the first time a single person symbolized, if only to a moderate degree and in a mainly spiritual and uninstitutionalized form, the unity of a tribe, for prophets are tribal figures. But they have a further significance, for their influence extended over tribal boundaries. Gwek had great influence in Gaajok, and it is said that because of it the Lou and the Gaajok for a time paid compensation for homicide between them. His influence reached as far as the Eastern Gaagwang and Gaajak. Dengleaka had a similar influence in the valley of the Zeraf, especially among the Thiang. Some of the Western Nuer prophets had a 792
reputation among a number of neighbouring tribes which united
for raids at the direction of their spirits. They were not a 648
mechanism of tribal structure like leopard-skin chiefs, but were 178
pivots of federation between adjacent tribes and personified the structural principle of opposition in its widest expression, the unity and homogeneity of Nuer against foreigners. Probably, the coalition of tribes and the organization of joint raids is very largely their achievement—though one cannot be sure of this in the absence of historical records—and has made them important and powerful figures in Nuerland. This interpretation explains how it is that prophets began half a century ago, or at any rate came to the fore then. Certain structural changes were taking place in response to changed conditions: the development of functions that were more purely political than any exercised by individuals before and of a greater degree of unity among neighbouring tribes than there had been hitherto. As Sky-gods passed at the death of prophets into their sons we are further justified in suggesting growth of hereditary political leadership which, with the strong tendency towards federation between adjacent tribes we attribute to the new Arab-European menace. Opposition between Nuer and their neighbours had always been sectional. They were now confronted by a more formidable and a common enemy. When the Government crushed the prophets this tendency was checked. As we understand the situation, the prophets were inevitably opposed to the Government because it was this opposition among the people which led to their emergence and was personified in them.

XIV

000 We have tried to show how distribution depends on oecology and how the lines of political cleavage tend to follow distribution in relation to modes of livelihood. But consideration of oecology only helps us to understand some demographic features of Nuer tribes and tribal segments and not the nature of their structural relations. These can only be understood in terms of certain structural principles and we have tried to isolate these principles, though not, we admit, at a very deep level of analysis. The chief points we have made are here briefly summarized.

18✓ (1) Nuer attach values to their geographical distribution and these evaluations give us socio-spacial units and relate these units into a system. (2) In all such units there is evident a tendency to segment into opposed segments, and also for these segments to fuse in relation to other units. (3) The smaller is the segment the greater is its cohesion, and it is for this reason that a segmentary system exists. (4) The political system of the Nuer can only be understood in relation to a whole structure of which other peoples form part and, likewise, the character of all Nuer communities must be defined by their relations with other communities of the same order within the whole political system. (5) The social system is much wider than spheres of actual political relations and cuts across them. (6) Political values depend on more than residential relations. Political relations can be isolated and studied independently of other social systems, but they are a specific function of the whole set of social relations. These are mainly of a kinship type and the organization of kinship relations into political relations in certain situations is one of our major problems. (7) The structural relations between Nuer tribes and other peoples and between tribe and tribe are maintained by the institution of warfare and the structural relations between segments of the same tribe are maintained by the institution of the feud. (8) There is no central administration, the leopard-skin chief being a ritual agent whose functions are to be interpreted in terms of

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

182

the structural mechanism of the feud. (9) Law is relative to the structural distance between persons and has not the same force in different sets of relations. (10) The new conditions of Arab-European intrusion have probably caused the development of prophets, with embryonic juridical functions, and greater intertribal solidarity.

CHAPTER V

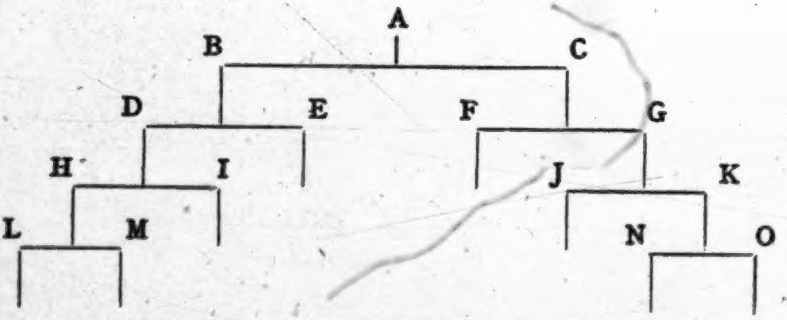
THE LINEAGE SYSTEM

I

614 MANY characteristics of Nuer lineages and clans belong to the
study of kinship which we hope to make in a subsequent
613 volume. Here only those characters which are strictly relevant
to the territorial system are discussed. We begin, however, by a formal definition of clan, lineage, and kin. A Nuer clan is the largest group of agnates who trace their descent from a common ancestor and between whom marriage is forbidden and sexual relations considered incestuous. It is not merely an undifferentiated group of persons who recognize their common agnatic kinship, as are some African clans, but is a highly segmented genealogical structure. We refer to these genealogical segments of a clan as its lineages. The relationship of any member of a lineage to any other member of it can be exactly stated in genealogical terms and, therefore, also his relationship to members of other lineages of the same clan can be traced, since the relationship of one lineage to another is genealogically known. A clan is a system of lineages and a lineage is a genealogical segment of a clan. One might speak of the whole clan as a lineage, but we prefer to speak of lineages as segments of it and to define them as such. Alternatively one may speak of a lineage as an agnatic group the members of which are genealogically linked, and of a clan as a system of such groups, the system being, among the Nuer, a genealogical system. In the diagram on p. 193 clan A is segmented into maximal lineages B and C and these bifurcate into major lineages D, E, F, and G. Minor lineages H, I, J, and K are segments of major lineages D and G, and L, M, N, and O are minimal lineages which are segments of H and K. It was found that words to describe four stages of lineage segmentation are sufficient when speaking of even the largest clans. The commonest Nuer word for a lineage is *thok dwiel* and the smallest genealogical unit they describe as a *thok dwiel* has a time depth of from three to five generations from living persons. A whole clan is thus a genealogical

[p. 192]

structure, and the letters in the diagram represent persons from 614 whom the clan and its segments trace their descent and from whom they often take their names. There must be at least 613 twenty such clans in Nuerland, without taking into account numerous small lineages of Dinka origin.



A lineage in the sense in which we generally employ this word is a group of living agnates, descended from the founder of that particular line. Logically [illegible] also includes dead persons descended from the founder—an[illegible] sometimes use the word to include them also—but these de[illegible] persons are only significant in that their genealogical position explains the relationships between the living. It is clear from the context whether the word is used in a more or less inclusive sense.

Clans and lineages have names, possess various ritual symbols, and observe certain reciprocal ceremonial relations. They have spear-names which are shouted out at ceremonies, honorific titles by which people are sometimes addressed, totemic and other mystical affiliations, and ceremonial status towards one another.

Agnatic kinship between lineages is called *buth*. *Buth* is 611 always an agnatic relationship between groups of persons, and only between persons in virtue of their membership of groups. *Buth* agnation is to be distinguished from kinship in the sense of relationship between persons, e.g. between a man and his father's brother and mother's brother. Cognation in this sense the Nuer call *mar*. Any person to whom a man can trace any genealogical link, whether through males or females, is *mar* to him. A man's *mar* are consequently all his father's kin and all 611 his mother's kin, and we call this cognatic category his kindred. 612

611 In normal usage the word refers to close relatives only. Therefore, as *mar* includes close agnates, the word *buth* is used only in
612 reference to distant agnates, between whom and the speaker there is lineage cleavage. There is *buth* relationship between lineages of the same clan and also between related clans which have the same ancestor but do not compose an exogamous unit. A Dinka can be given *buth* relationship to a Nuer lineage by being adopted into a collateral lineage. We thus formally distinguish between the lineage system, which is a system of agnatic groups, and the kinship system, which is a system of categories of relationship to any individual; and we speak of these relationships as a man's paternal kin and his maternal kin, and both together as his kindred.

613 Political and lineage groups are not identical, but they have a certain correspondence and often bear the same name, for a
619 tribal area and its divisions are often called after the clans and lineages which are supposed to have first occupied them. This makes their inter-relation a very difficult problem to investigate and has led to some confusion in writings on the Nuer. Thus Gaawar is the name of a tribal area, of the tribesmen who inhabit it, and of the members of a clan which have in that area a socially dominant status. Likewise Gaajok and Gaajak are names of territories, tribes, and lineages. To clarify description clan and lineage names are therefore printed in small capitals. Hence, when we say that a man is a Gaawar we mean that he is a Gaawar tribesman, a man who resides in Gaawar country, whereas when we say that he is a GAAWAR we mean that he is a member of the GAAWAR clan, a descendant in the male line from War, the founder of the dominant clan in Gaawar country.

II

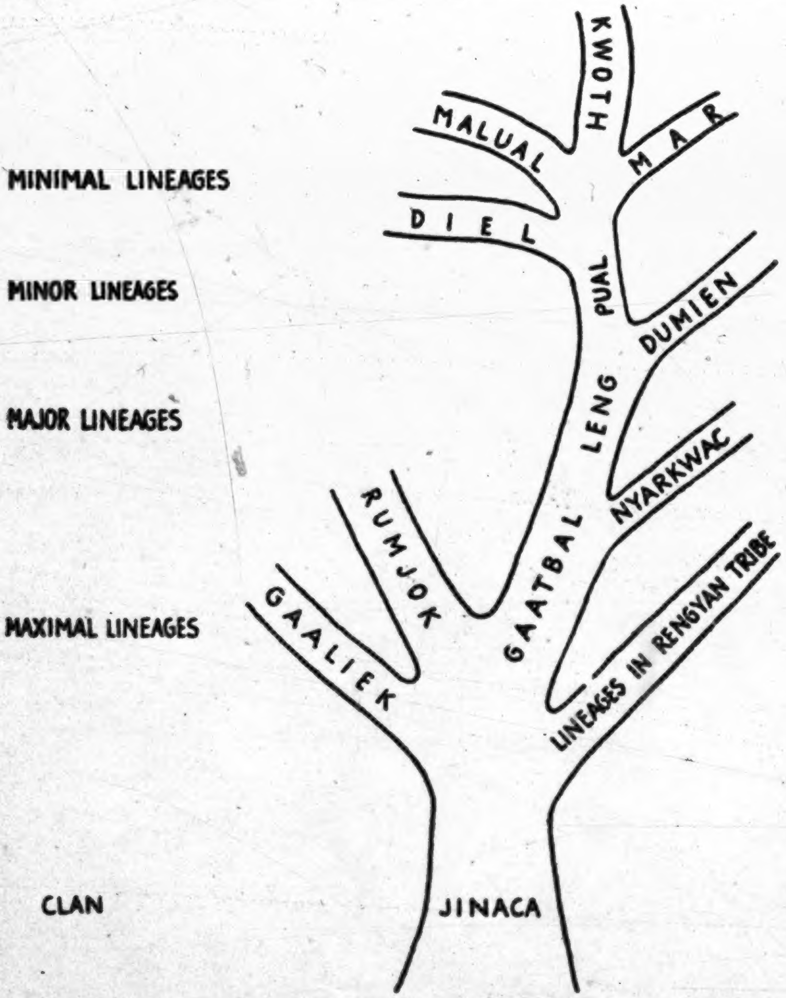
613 Three trees of clan descent are presented in the following
614 section in a form conventional to us, and which would also commend itself to Nuer, who sometimes speak of a lineage as *kar*, a branch, as illustrations of the way in which lineages split up, each being a branch of a larger one. The JINACA are the dominant clan in the Lou and Rengyan tribes, the GATGANKIIR are the dominant clan in the Jikany tribes, and the (GAA)THIANG

are the dominant clan in the Thiang tribe. Only one line of descent is shown from the roots to the twigs, from the clan ancestor to the minimal lineages, but it is indicated where the other main branches and boughs, the other maximal, major, and minor lineages leave the stem. 613 614

III

We have defined lineage and clan and give some examples of them in diagrams. In this section we note some characteristics of both which are germane to our inquiry. It may at once be said that it is not easy to discover a Nuer's clan, for a clan is not to Nuer an abstraction and there is no word in their language that can be translated 'clan' in ours. One may obtain the name of a man's clan by asking him who was his 'ancestor of yore' or his 'first ancestor' (*gwandong*) or what are his 'seeds' (*kwai*), but it is only when one already knows the clans and their lineages and their various ritual symbols, as the Nuer does, that one can easily place a man's clan through his lineage or by his spear-name and honorific salutation, for Nuer speak fluently in terms of lineages. A lineage is *thok mac*, the hearth, or *thok dwiel*, the entrance to the hut, or one may speak of *kar*, a branch. *Thok dwiel* is the commonest expression to denote a line of agnatic descent in those situations when genealogical exactness and precision are relevant, but in normal everyday usage Nuer employ the word *cieng*, as will be explained later. The clan has itself a position analogous to that of a lineage in the clan system, and it is significant to the Nuer not so much as a unique group as a segment in a system of groups, for it acquires its singularity only as part of a system.

A lineage is a relative term, since its range of reference depends on the particular person who is selected as the point of departure in tracing descent. Thus, if we were to begin with a father, the *thok dwiel* would include only sons and daughters, but if we were to take a grandfather as our point of departure, it would include all his sons and daughters and the children of his sons. A larger and larger number of agnates would be included the higher up in the line of ascent we were to take the point of departure for counting descendants. It might be maintained that the smallest possible lineage are the sons and daughters of one man, but Nuer do not refer to them as a *thok dwiel*. They are, with their father and their mother, a family and household. One cannot say definitely how far up a line of ascent Nuer will go in selecting the apex of a minimal lineage. They may go back only two steps, to the grandfather, making in all three generations of agnates, but a minimal lineage of four or five generations is more usual. Apart from Nuer usage, we consider it important to define lineages as groups with a depth of at least three generations, since they are then distinct structural


KWOTH
MALUAL
MAR
MINIMAL LINEAGES
DIEL
PUAL
DUMIEN
MINOR LINEAGES
LENG
MAJOR LINEAGES
RUMJOK
NYARKWAC
GAATBAL
GAALIEK
LINEAGES IN RENGYAN TRIBE
MAXIMAL LINEAGES
CLAN
JINACA

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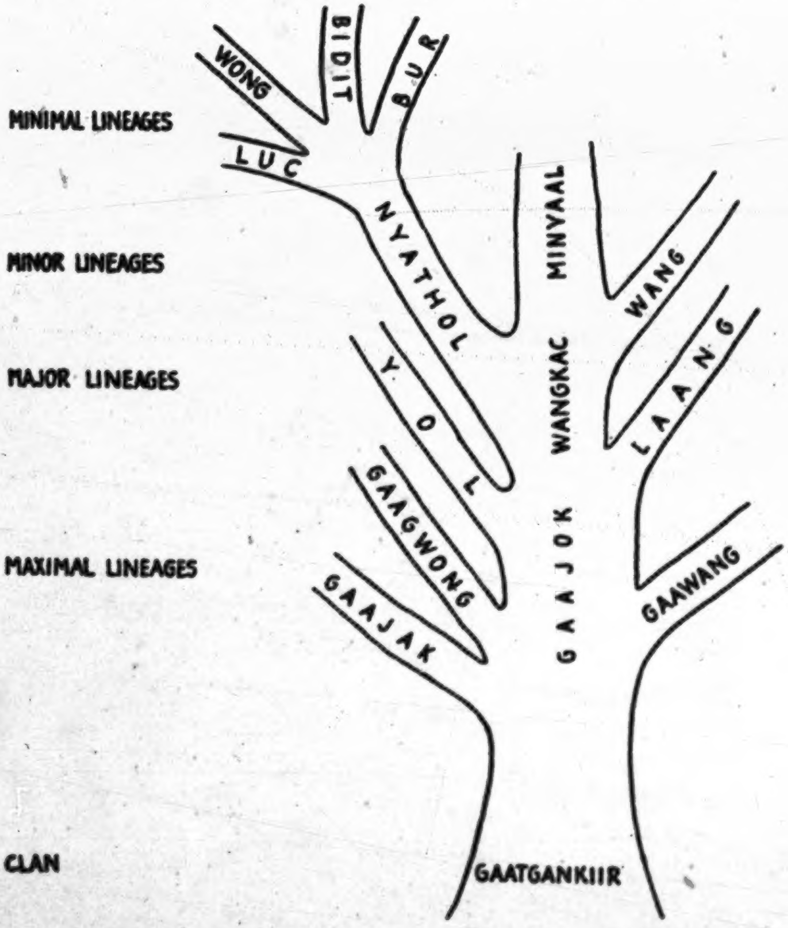
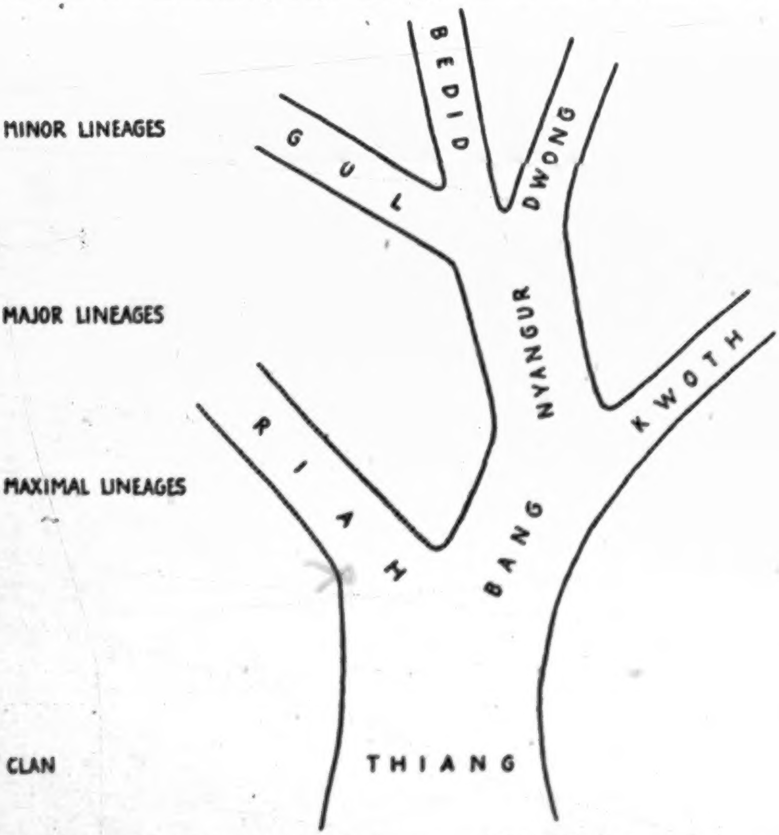
segments in a system of such segments and not easily confused with domestic groups.

The Nuer clan, being thus highly segmented, has many of the characteristics which we have found in tribal structure. Its lineages are distinct groups only in relation to each other. Thus, in the diagram on p. 193, M is a group only in opposition to L, H is a group only in opposition to I, D is a group only in opposition to E, and so on. There is always fusion of collateral lineages of the same branch in relation to a collateral branch, e.g. in the diagram, L and M are a single minor lineage, H, in opposition to I, and not separate lineages; and D and E are a


WONG
BIDIT
BUR
MINIMAL LINEAGES
LUC
MINYAAL
NYATHOL
MINOR LINEAGES
WANG
WANGKAC
LAANG
MAJOR LINEAGES
YOL
GAAGWONG
GAAJOK
MAXIMAL LINEAGES
GAAWANG
GAAJAK
CLAN
GAATGANKIIR

613 614 single maximal lineage, B, in opposition to C, and not separate lineages. Hence two lineages which are equal and opposite are composite in relation to a third, so that a man is a member of a lineage in relation to a certain group and not a member of it in relation to a different group. Lineage values are thus essentially


MINOR LINEAGES
MAJOR LINEAGES
MAXIMAL LINEAGES
CLAN
BEDID
GUL
DWONG
NYANGUR
KWOTH
RIAH
BANG
THIANG

relative like tribal values, and we suggest later that the processes of lineage segmentation and political segmentation are to some extent co-ordinate.

613 614 173 Since humans propagate themselves, the clans might be supposed to be further and further removed from their founder, and the living representatives of a clan to become wider and wider separated in lineage structure. However, we do not believe that this is the case. In theory every man is a potential founder of a lineage, but, in fact, lineages spring from very few

names. The others, for one reason or another, drop out, so that 613
only certain lines of descent are remembered. Also, in those 614
lines that persist names drop out of the steps in ascent to the
founder of the clan, so that the distance in generations from 173
the founder of a clan to the present day remain fairly constant. We have suggested in our discussion on Nuer time-reckoning that there is always this difference between a true genealogy and a genealogy which Nuer deem to be true. The evidence for the assertion depends partly on a comparative study of East African genealogies and partly on a study of Nuer genealogies. We mention some of the reasons, arising from reflections on Nuer genealogies, that have led us to this conclusion, since the validity of some arguments, developed later in the chapter, depends on their acceptance.

(1) All the main clans have about ten to twelve generations from the present day to the ancestors who gave rise to them. There is no reason to suppose that the Nuer came into existence ten to twelve generations ago. (2) When a Nuer is asked his lineage he gives it by reference to an ancestor, the founder of his minimal lineage, who is from three to six, generally four to five, steps in ascent from the present day. These steps are certain and agreed upon. This is understandable, since five steps represent a man, his father, his grandfather, and his grandfather's father and grandfather, and since a man instructs his children in the names of his immediate forbears. It is evident that after five or six generations the names of ancestors become lost. Young men often do not know them, and there is frequent confusion and disagreement among older persons. The founder of the minor lineage must be placed somewhere between the founder of the minimal lineage and the founder of the major lineage; the founder of the major lineage must be placed somewhere between the founder of the minor lineage and the founder of the maximal lineage; and the founder of the maximal lineage must be placed somewhere between the founder of the major lineage and the founder of the clan. The names of these founders of lineage-branches must go into the line of ascent somewhere, and in a definite order, because they are significant points of reference. It is immaterial whether other names go in or not, and their order is without significance. Consequently some informants put them in and some leave them out, and some put them in one order and others in a different order. It is evident, moreover, that since the minimal lineage consists of four or five actual steps in ascent, there has been telescoping of the agnatic

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line from the founder of the minimal lineage further up the line of ascent to the founder of the clan, for the founder of the minimal lineage was himself the extremity of another minimal lineage which has, by increase in generations, become the minor lineage, and so on. Consequently, even were the supposed founder of the clan the real founder of it, there ought to be at least sixteen steps from him to the present day, assuming that minimal lineages have always been of the same character as at the present time. The length of each fork in the tree of descent ought logically to be of equal length, whereas the twig, so to speak, is longer than the branch or stem from which it springs. (3) There is another way in which only significant ancestors, i.e. ancestors who form the apex of a triangle of descent, are denoted in genealogical trees, and irrelevant ancestors, i.e. ancestors who do not give their name to a group of descendants, are obscured and finally forgotten. Not only do links drop out of the direct line of descent, but also collateral lines merge. It is clear from a study of Nuer genealogies that the descendants of one or two brothers become numerous and dominant, that the descendants of others die out, and that the descendants of yet others are relatively few and weak and attach themselves, as is explained in later sections, by participation in local and corporate life, to a stronger and dominant collateral line. They become assimilated to this line in ordinary lineage reference and eventually are grafted on to it by misplacement of their founder, who becomes a son instead of a brother of its founder. The merging of collateral lines higher up a lineage seems to be common, and to be more frequent and necessary the higher up one proceeds. It is necessary because, as will be seen later, the lineage system provides one of the principles of political organization.

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The structural form of clans remains constant, while actual lineages at any point in time are highly dynamic, creating new bifurcations and merging old ones. They may therefore be presented as trees. But a presentation more useful for sociological analysis is in terms of structural distance, for lineages are groups of living agnates, and the distance between them varies with their relative positions in clan structure. Thus, in the diagram below, the line A–B represents the JINACA clan. The agnatic distance between the MAR minimal lineage and other lineages of the same clan is represented both on the line A–B and also in its time depth by their point of convergence in ascent on the line B–C. The wider the range of agnation specified the further back their point of convergence, so that

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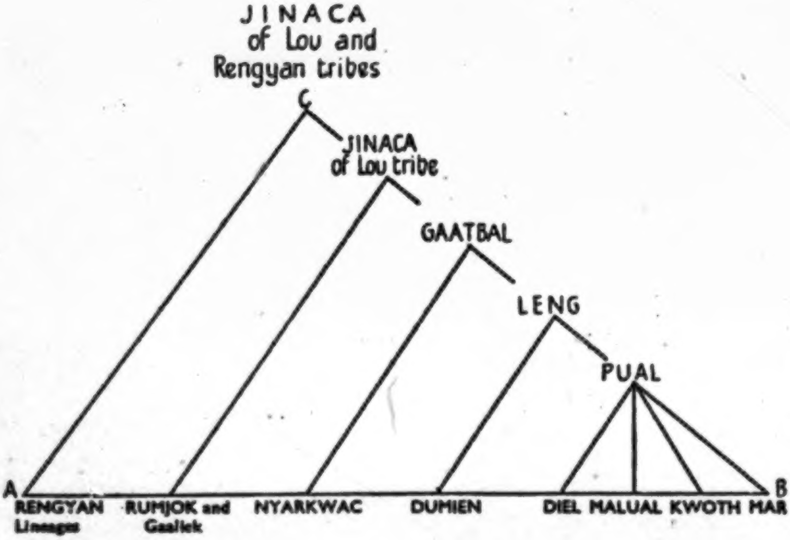
the depth of a lineage (the vertical line of ascent) is always in proportion to its width (the base line representing living lineage groups in the clan system).

A Nuer clan, therefore, is a system of lineages, the relationship of each lineage to every other lineage being marked in its structure by a point of reference in ascent. The distance to this


JINACA
of Lou and
Rengyan tribes
C
JINACA
of Lou tribe
GAATBAL
LENG
PUAL
A
B
RENGYAN
Lineages
RUMJOK and
Gaaliek
NYARKWAC
DUMIEN
DIEL
MALUAL
KWOTH
MAR

point is what we call the time depth of a lineage. In theory the genealogical relationship between any two clansmen can be traced through this point, and Nuer can actually trace it if they take the trouble. However, they do not consider it necessary to know the exact genealogical relationship between persons who are known to be distantly related by membership of their respective lineages. Thus it is sufficient for a man of the GAATBAL lineage to know that another man is of the GAALIEK lineage without his having to know the man's exact descent, for these two lineages stand to one another in a certain structural relationship, and therefore the two men stand to one another at that distance. Nuer are conversant up to a point—generally up to the founders of their minimal and minor lineages—with the full range of their genealogical relationships. Beyond this point they reckon kinship in terms of lineages. It is necessary

PLATE XXI

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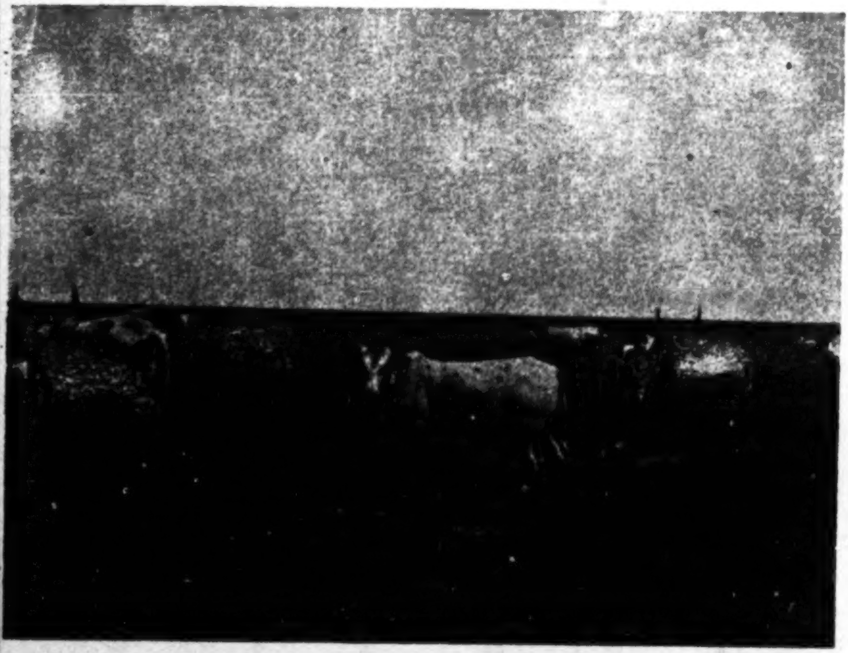
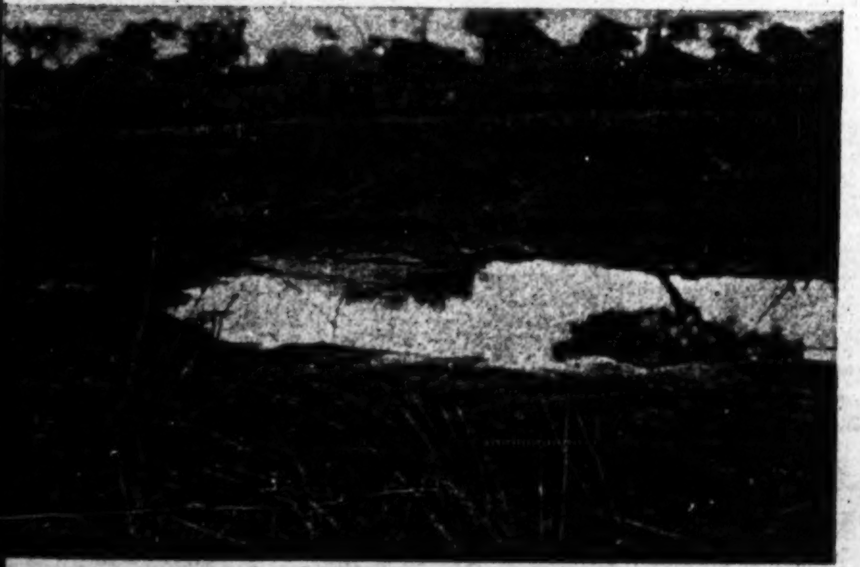


a. Cattle grazing on ridge (Leek)



b. Early dry season cattle camp at forest pool (Lou)

[Face p. 201]

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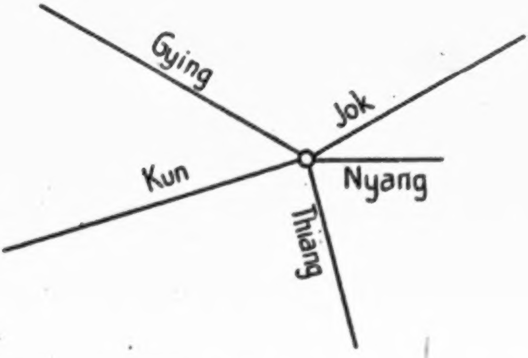
for a Nuer to know not only that a man is a fellow clansman, but also to know what lineage he belongs to, in deciding questions of exogamy and ceremonial. The relationship between a lineage and others of the same clan is not an equal relationship, for lineages are structurally differentiated units which stand to one another at different and exact structural distances.



It is interesting to note how the Nuer themselves figure a lineage system. When illustrating on the ground a number of related lineages they do not present them the way we figure them in this chapter as a series of bifurcations of descent, as a tree of descent, or as a series of triangles of ascent, but as a number of lines running at angles from a common point. Thus in Western Nuerland a man illustrated some of the GAATGANKIIR lineages, using the names of their founders, by drawing the figure above on the ground. This representation and Nuer comments on it show several significant facts about the way in which Nuer see the system. They see it primarily as actual relations between groups of kinsmen within local communities rather than as a tree of descent, for the persons after whom the lineages are called do not all proceed from a single individual. Jok, Thiang, and Kun are three sons of Kir and founders of the maximal lineages GAAJOK, GAAJAK, and GAAGWONG of the GAATGANKIIR clan. Thiang and Kun are shown next to each other because jointly they form the lineage framework of the Gaajak tribe. The Gying lineage does not belong to the GAATGANKIIR clan, but it is shown next to Kun because of the proximity of the Reng section, of which it forms part, to the

Gaagwong section. Nyang is shown as a short line at the side 613
of Jok because, although the lineage which springs from him 614
belongs to the group of lineages founded by Thiang, they live in the Gaagwang tribe together with a lineage descended from Jok, and the Gaagwang tribe is closely associated with the Gaajok tribe. The Nuer, outside certain ritual situations, evaluate clans and lineages in terms of their local relations. Herein lies the importance of these groups for this study.

IV

Nuer lineages are not corporate, localized, communities, 613
though they are frequently associated with territorial units, and 621
those members of a lineage who live in an area associated with it see themselves as a residential group, and the value, or concept, of lineage thus functions through the political system. Every Nuer village is associated with a lineage, and, though the members of it often constitute only a small proportion of the village population, the village community is identified with them in such a way that we may speak of it as an aggregate of persons clustered around an agnatic nucleus. The aggregate is linguistically identified with the nucleus by the common designation of the village community by the name of the lineage. It is only in reference to rules of exogamy, certain ritual activities, and to a very limited extent to responsibility for homicide, that one needs to regard lineages as completely autonomous groups. In social life generally they function within local communities, of all sizes from the village to the tribe, and as part of them.

A Nuer rarely talks about his lineage as distinct from his community, and in contrast to other lineages which form part of it, outside a ceremonial context. I have watched a Nuer who knew precisely what I wanted, trying on my behalf to discover from a stranger the name of his lineage. He often found great initial difficulty in making the man understand the information required of him, for Nuer think generally in terms of local divisions and of the relations between them, and an attempt to discover lineage affiliations apart from their community relations, and outside a ceremonial context, generally led to misunderstanding in the opening stages of an inquiry.

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I must here again refer to the term *cieng*, which has been a source of confusion in Nuer studies. A Nuer does not normally say that he is a man of such-and-such a *thok dwiel* (lineage) when he denotes his social position, but says that he is a man of a certain local community, *cieng*. Thus he says he is a man of *cieng* Mar, *cieng* Pual, *cieng* Leng, *cieng* Gaatbal, and so on (see diagram on p. 196).[1] What he is telling you is that he is a member of a group of people who live together in a village or district or tribal section. In ordinary situations of social life it is irrelevant whether he is, or is not, a member of the lineages from which these local communities derive their names. Moreover, since in ordinary speech a lineage-name has a local rather than a strict kinship connotation, those who share community life with the members of the lineage speak of themselves as though they also were members of it, because politically they are identified with it. Thus the word *cieng* is often used in an ambiguous sense which leaves lineage affiliation uncertain, since it is irrelevant, and it may, in consequence, be difficult, without much probing, to discover to what lineage a man belongs.

A *cieng*, in the sense of 'homestead', is called after the man who owns it, e.g. the homestead of Rainen is called '*cieng* Rainen'. When Rainen is dead and his sons and younger brothers and nephews live in his home they may call the hamlet after him, and it will be said that they are all members of *cieng* Rainen. If Rainen was an important man, and proves to have been the begetter of a strong line of descent, the whole village wherein live his agnatic heirs, and strangers who have intermarried with them or in other ways become attached to them, may thus become known as '*cieng Rainen*'. In course of time his descendants multiply and constitute the nucleus of a tribal section which is called '*cieng* Rainen'. Hence it has come about that many tribal sections are called after persons, e.g. *cieng* Minyaal, *cieng* Dumien, *cieng* Wangkac, &c. A lineage thus becomes identified in speech with the territory it occupies; the district occupied by the major lineage of WANGKAC, for example, being known as *cieng* Wangkac. A Nuer then talks about the local community and the lineage which is its political nucleus as interchangeable terms. He even speaks of *cieng* WANGKAC when he means the WANGKAC lineage. This habit confuses a European, since the WANGKAC lineage and the people who live in the Wangkac section are by no means the same.

If you ask a Lou man what is his *cieng* you are asking him where he lives, what is his village, or district. Suppose that he replies that his *cieng* is *cieng* Pual. You can then ask him what his *cieng* forms part of, and he will tell you that it is a part of *cieng* Leng,

[1] [See cat. 116,—Analyst]

giving the name of a tertiary tribal section. If you continue to interrogate him he will inform you that *cieng* Leng is part of *cieng* 613 Gaatbal, a secondary tribal section, and that *cieng* Gaatbal is a 621 division of the Gun primary section of the Lou tribe. But he has told you nothing about his clan affiliation. He may or may not be a member of the PUAL lineage, which forms part of the LENG lineage, which forms part of the GAATBAL lineage, which is part of the clan of JINACA or GAATGANNACA, the people of Nac or the children of the children of Nac. In the same way, if a Jikany man tells you that he belongs to *cieng* Kwith of the Gaajok it does not follow that he is descended from Kwe (Kwith) who is descended from Jok the founder of the GAAJOK lineage of the GAATGANKIIR clan, the children of the children of Kir. He may merely mean that he lives in a tribal section occupied by the KWITH lineage of this clan. But these men will not tell you that they are not members of the dominant lineages in these sections, and will allow you to assume that they are, for in community relations there is a degree of linguistic assimilation of all residents other than members of the dominant lineage to that lineage, and people do not wish the fact that they are strangers in the tribal area to be publicly stressed, especially if they are of Dinka origin.

The assimilation of community ties to lineage structure, the expression of territorial affiliation in a lineage idiom, and the expression of lineage affiliation in terms of territorial attachments, is what makes the lineage system so significant for a study of political organization.

V

In emphasizing the relations between lineages and local communities we speak mainly of those lineages which are segments 613 of the dominant clans in the different tribes. It is these which 619 have the greater political importance. We speak of them more fully in later sections. Here we give a preliminary account of how they are associated with tribal segments and how they act in those segments as a framework of the political structure.

The two diagrams which follow show the main lineages of the dominant clans among the Lou and Eastern Jikany tribes and the larger tribal sections in which they are dominant. The lines of descent are traced only as far as is necessary to illustrate the argument which follows. They may be compared with the trees

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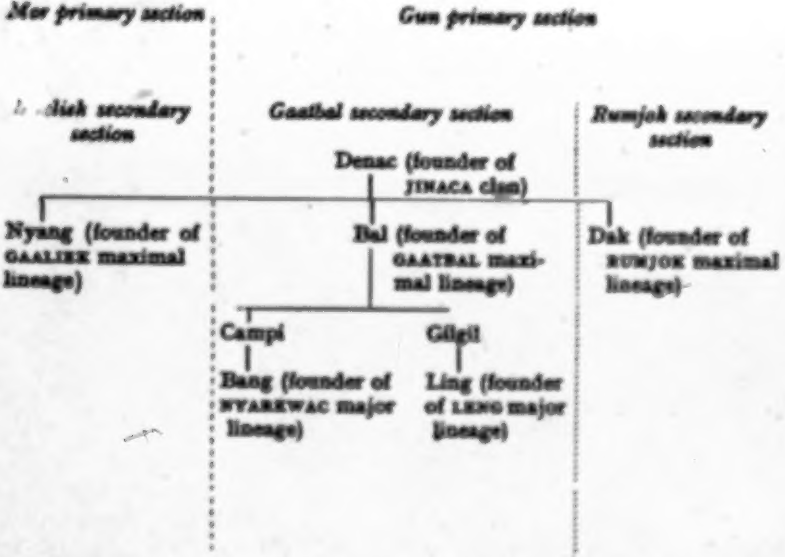
of descent of the two clans[1] and with the maps on pp. 56 and 58, which show the distribution of the sections of the two tribes.

LOU TRIBE


Mor primary section
Gun primary section
Gaaliek secondary section
Gaatbal secondary section
Rumjok secondary section
Denac (founder of JINACA clan)
Nyang (founder of GAALIEK maximal lineage)
Bal (founder of GAATBAL maximal lineage)
Dak (founder of RUMJOK maximal lineage)
Campi
Gilgil
Bang (founder of NYAREKWAC major lineage)
Ling (founder of LENG major lineage)

In the Lou tribe it will be seen that the descendants of Nyang, son of Denac, form the nucleus of the Gaaliek secondary section; that the descendants of Bal, another of his sons, form the nucleus of the Gaatbal secondary section, and that the descendants of Dak, his third son, form the nucleus of the Rumjok secondary section. The sections shown in the map, which are not accounted for in the genealogical tree, are the Jimac and the Jaajoah sections, which have clan nuclei of foreign origin. It must be made clear that when a tribal section is called after a lineage it does not mean that all members of the lineage live in it, though probably most of them do, and it certainly does not mean that they alone live in it, for investigations show that they form only a small minority in the total population of the section. Large stranger lineages are included in the area designated by a title taken from any of the sons of Denac, e.g. the THIANG lineage in the Gaatbal primary section. Also there are innumerable small lineages of Nuer strangers and of Dinka clustered around lineages of GAATNACA descent. Thus, if one visits the villages and cattle camps called after lineages which spring from the GAALIEK maximal lineage, e.g. the lineages of JAANYEN and KUOK, one will find them occupied by a relatively small number of persons of these lineages,

[1] [See pp. 196-97, Cat. 116 — Analyst]

while most of the residents will be found to have sprung from other Nuer and Dinka clans. Thus, at the cattle camp at Muot Dit in 1930 there were not only various minimal lineages of the RUE branch of the RUMJOK maximal lineage of the GAATNACA clan, the 'owners' of the site, but also a KAANG lineage from Lang country, a KAN lineage from Bul country, a KONG lineage from Lang country, all segments of clans dominant to the west of the Nile, and many Dinka lineages. Likewise at the village of Parkur in Leek country in 1930 hamlets were occupied by a NYAPIR lineage of the dominant GAATBOL clan, a CUOR lineage of Dinka which has close association with the JIKUL clan, a CENG lineage from Beegh country, a RUAL lineage from Bul country, a KWACUKUNA lineage of the JIMEM clan, and other lineages.

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The descendants of Jok[1]–Kir form the aristocratic nucleus of the Gaajok tribe; the descendants of Thiang[2]–Kir and Kun–Kir form the aristocratic nucleus of the Gaajak tribe; and the descendants of Gwang–Jok and Nyang–Thiang together form the aristocratic nucleus of the Gaagwang tribe. On the map on p. 58 the names of these lineages figure as tribal sections, for they have given their names to the areas in which they are dominant. Thus the names of three major lineages descended from Jok, LAANG, YOL, and WANGKAC appear on the map as Laang, Yol, and Wangkac. None of the foreign lineages is of sufficient size to give its name to a large tribal division, though they give their names to small sections and villages.[3] Here again, it must not be supposed that the descendants of Jok form more than a fragment of the Gaajok tribe. In the same way the Gaagwang tribe comprises many foreign elements which probably far outnumber the descendants of Nyang–Thiang and Gwang–Jok. The same applies to the Gaajak tribe. The GAAGWONG lineage is so closely associated with the GAAJAK lineage in tribal life that they form together a twin nucleus of the Gaajak tribe. The secondary sections of Lony, Kang, and Tar, shown on the map, are all called after lineages which spring from Thiang–Kir. Likewise the secondary sections of Nyayan, Cany, and Wau are all called after lineages which spring from Kun–Kir. Hence the only section in the map not accounted for

[1] Also called Majok.

[2] Also called Mathiang.

[3] Village-names are generally place-names and not names of lineages, but one may refer to the communities by the names of their chief lineages. It often happens that these lineages are of stranger or Dinka descent, and though the communities may be referred to by their names, it is recognized that the sites belong to lineages of the dominant clan of the tribe. Hence a village may be associated with two lineages. Thus the JUAK, NUWOL, &c., of the Leek tribe are stranger or Dinka lineages after whom village communities are called, but the sites are the land of the KEUNYANG lineage, and they alone are *diel* in them.

[103]

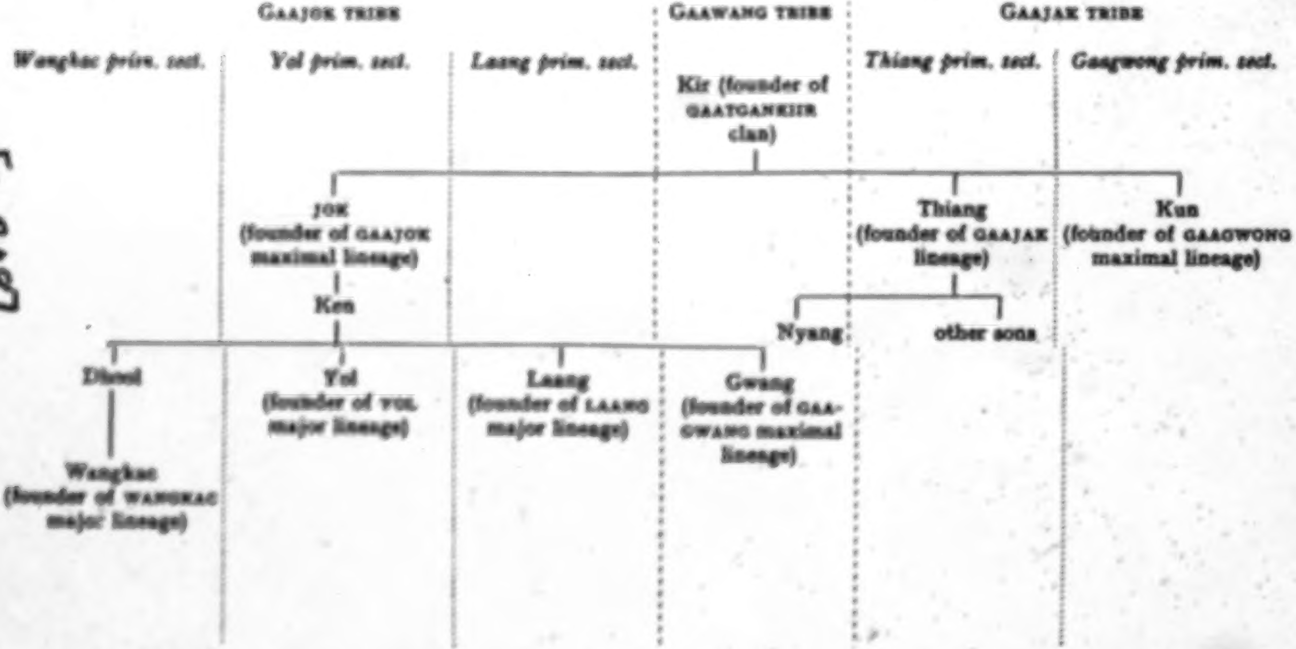
[p. 208 contains no textual material]

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

613
619

[p.208]

JIKANY TRIBES


GAAJOK TRIBE
GAAWANG TRIBE
GAAJAK TRIBE
Wangkac prim. sect.
Yol prim. sect.
Laang prim. sect.
Thiang prim. sect.
Gaagwong prim. sect.
Kir (founder of GAATGANKIIR clan)
JOK (founder of GAAJOK maximal lineage)
Thiang (founder of GAAJAK lineage)
Kun (founder of GAAGWONG maximal lineage)
Ken
Nyang
other sons
Dheel
Yol (founder of YOL major lineage)
Laang (founder of LAANG major lineage)
Gwang (founder of GAA-GWANG maximal lineage)
Wangkac (founder of WANGKAC major lineage)

613

in the diagram is the primary section of Reng, the Kong and 619
Dhilleak divisions of which have clan nuclei of different origin to
the other sections.

In all these tribes and tribal sections there is much admixture 613
of lineages in communities. The same conditions are found in
the Zeraf valley and also, and perhaps to a larger degree, in 619
Western Nuerland. Nuer say that feuds and quarrels between 166
lineages chiefly led to their dispersal, and they can cite many
examples. Thus the descendants of Nyang–Thiang left the
other sons of Thiang and joined the people with whom they
form the Gaagwang tribe, and the NYARUNY lineage left their
kinsmen of the Thiang primary section and joined the Reng
primary section of the Gaajak tribe. After fights, a whole
community, led by its dominant lineage, may in this way move
to a different section or tribe and take up permanent residence
with them. Migration led to further dispersal, since some
lineages remained in the homeland to the west of the Nile and
others crossed the Nile and Zeraf and settled to the east of these
rivers. Nuer say that in the earliest stages of the migration the
warriors used to raid Dinka and return home to their kinsmen
after each raid. Then they settled to the east, but kept in close
contact with the people of their lineage to the west. But as they
shifted farther away the contact lessened and finally, in most
cases, ceased altogether. When lineages migrated they must
already have been nuclei of heterogeneous accretions and not
exclusive groups of agnates: but admixture was no doubt
hastened and made more complete by movement.

Two factors other than migration, quarrels, intermarriage, 181
&c., have probably contributed to the dispersal of lineages. 771
The Nuer are mainly a pastoral people with dominant pastoral
interests and do not feel themselves bound by economic necessity
or by ritual ties to any particular spot. Where his cattle are is
the Nuer's home; his hearth is the droppings of his cattle and his
altar a light pole (*riek*) which he plants wherever he may wander.
The spirits which give him protection and the ancestral ghosts
that watch over his welfare are no more bound to the soil than
he is and they are present wherever are the herds. Beasts
dedicated to ghosts and spirits are his wandering shrines. Also 79
the Nuer have no organized cult of ancestral ghosts. The dead

769 are buried quickly and crudely in unvisited and unremembered
tombs; only in very rare cases are sacrifices offered to them;
and there are no sacred places associated with them.

[181] Thus Nuer have always felt themselves free to wander as they
pleased, and if a man is unhappy, his family sick, his herds
613 declining, his garden exhausted, his relations with some of his
593 neighbours uncongenial, or merely if he is restless, he moves to
a different part of the country and resides with some kinsmen.
607 It is seldom that a man goes alone, for brothers are a corporate
601 group and, especially if they are sons of one mother, stick
together. So, frequently as a result of quarrels, a group of brothers
will often leave a village and settle elsewhere. Nuer say that
they usually make for the home of a married sister, where they
are certain to be well received. Here they are respected as
jiciengthu, in-laws, and their children accepted as *gaat nàr*,
children of the mother's brother, while the people they join are
to them *cieng conyimar*, the people of my sister's husband, and
gaat nyal, children of a female agnate, and *gaat waca*, children
of the father's sister. A man who changes his residence thus
becomes a member of a different community and enters into
intimate relations with the dominant lineage of that community.
When a GAATIEK man said to me, 'Now that I have come to
settle in *Cieng* Kwoth I am a man of *Cieng* Kwoth', he meant
that outside ceremonial situations he identified himself with the
KWOTH lineage rather than with his own.

613 Even one man is a potential lineage and several brothers even
more so. A minimal, and then a minor, lineage comes into being
621 which has only ritual status towards the other lineages of its
clan, whereas with the people in whose village and district its
members have grown up it has a mutuality of interests and a
community of experience. The group thus develops into a distinct
lineage. It intermarries with the other people of its home
and very often it intermarries so frequently with the dominant
lineage of the district that further marriage between them
becomes impossible without breaking incest regulations. In
this way lineages twine around one another and a texture of
cognatic relationships unites all members of the community.
Only a few such lineages establish themselves and survive as
lineages. Many either die out or lose much of their individuality

PLATE XXII

312
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a. Spearing fish from dam (Eastern Gaajok)

226

b. Harpoon-fishing in Lake Fadoi (Lou)

[Face p. 210]

613 and become attached to larger and stronger lineages by processes
621 which we will explain later.

Nevertheless, a Nuer lineage never entirely merges into
613 another clan. There are always certain ritual observances
621 which cannot be shared. If intermarriage creates community
614 ties between two lineages, it likewise keeps them distinct, since
[582] one may only marry those who are not of one's agnatic group,
and even if two lineages intermarry to such an extent that cognatic relationship is a bar to further marriage between them, then each may marry into collateral lineages of the other's clan and children of their daughters. If a mythological link forges a closer union between them it is also a record of their different lines of descent, explaining, indeed, how people of divergent descent are living together amicably. Thus a lineage, however far removed from its homeland and however widely separated from its kinsfolk, never becomes entirely absorbed or loses its ritual heritage. A lineage can only merge with a collateral lineage of the same clan.

But though lineages maintain their autonomy, the lineage value only operates in the restricted field of ceremonial and is, therefore, only occasionally a determinant of behaviour. Community values are those which constantly direct behaviour, and these operate in a different set of social situations to lineage values. While lineage values control ceremonial relations between groups of agnates, community values control political relations between groups of people living in separate villages, tribal sections, and tribes. The two kinds of value control distinct planes of social life.

It is, as we explain in the following sections, only the close association between a tribe and its dominant clan, and lineages in one way or another related to this dominant clan, that makes the agnatic principle in lineage structure politically important, for these lineages function as values in the political system which gives them corporate substance.

VI

614 In spite of so much dispersion and admixture of clans there is
in every tribe a definite relation between its political structure
619 and the clan system, for in each tribe a clan, or a maximal lineage

614 of a clan, is associated with the political group in which it
619 occupies a dominant position among the other agnatic groups that live in it. Moreover, each of its segments tends to be associated with a segment of the tribe in such a way that there is a correspondence, and often linguistic identification, between the parts of a clan and the parts of a tribe. Thus, if we compare the diagram on p. 144[1] with that on p. 193[1] and suppose clan A to be the dominant clan in tribe B, then maximal lineages B and C correspond to primary sections X and Y, major lineages D and E correspond to secondary sections X^1 and X^2, major lineages F and G correspond to secondary sections Y^1 and Y^2, and minor lineages J and K correspond to tertiary sections Z^1 and Z^2. Minimal lineages are associated with villages composing the tertiary sections. It is for this reason that we have spoken of the dominant clan as forming a framework on which the political system of the tribe is built up through a complex series of kinship links. The system of lineages of the dominant clan is a conceptual skeleton on which the local communities are built up into an organization of related parts, or, as we would prefer to state it, a system of values linking tribal segments and providing the idiom in which their relations can be expressed and directed.

614 The JINACA of Lou country lived originally with their kinsmen
619 the JINACA of Rengyan country to the west of the Nile, but they split off from them and, having crossed the Nile, conquered present-
565 day Lou country. Here they were the first occupants, or at any rate the strongest element among the first occupants. Probably JINACA men frequently crossed the Nile to join their kinsmen to the east and amalgamated with them. Such persons would at once be members of the dominant clan and be spoken of as *diel*, members of the aristocratic group of lineages. But members of other clans which settled in Lou country during or after the occupation were classed as strangers (*rul*). In the same manner those lineages of the GAATGANKIIR clan who crossed the Nile and settled to the north of the Sobat held there a privileged position among other Nuer who joined them.

Every Nuer tribe has in this way its *diel*, its superior clan, though in the case of some tribes we are not certain of the correct designation of these clans. Among the Gaawar they are the GAAWAR, among the Thiang the (GAA)THIANG, among the Leek the GAATBOL, among the Wot, and probably also among the Ror, the

[1] [See cat. 116 — Analyst]

JIDIET, and among the Begh the JIKOI, &c. Where the correct clan name is unknown one may refer to these dominant elements as the aristocrats (*diel*) or the 'bulls' (*tut*) of such-and-such a tribe, as the Nuer themselves frequently do, e.g. a *dil* or *tut* Bura, an aristocrat of the Bor tribe, *dil* or *tut* Wotni, an aristocrat of the Wot tribe, *dil* or *tut* Beeka, an aristocrat of the Beegh tribe, *dil* or *tut* Laka, an aristocrat of the Lak tribe, &c. One may always speak of an aristocratic clan or lineage by its proper name or by reference to the tribe in which it has a privileged position, e.g. GAATNACA, children of Nac, or *diel* Looka, aristocrats of the Lou tribe, GAATBOL, children of Bul, or *diel* Leegni, aristocrats of the Leek tribe. 614 619 565

There are four essential points to be remembered about these aristocratic clans. (1) Not every clan has superior status in a tribe. Some clans, e.g. the JIMEM and the JAKAR, have no *wec*, no local community, as the Nuer say. Others have village-sites where they have resided for a long time and which are called after them, but they are not *diel* in the tribe where these sites are found. Many are like cuttings which have lost all contact with the parent stem, but these may at once be designated Dinka lineages that have sprung from immigrants, whose descendants sometimes know the Dinka country of their origin but do not know their position in its system of lineages. Consequently they cannot trace ascent for as many generations as true Nuer, and their lineages are narrower in range and territorially more restricted. One finds them in little local pockets in a single tribe, whereas the Nuer clans are distributed throughout many tribes.

(2) Not every member of a Nuer clan lives in the tribe where it has superior status, for most clans are found in all parts of Nuerland. Most JINACA live in Lou and Rengyan tribal areas, where they are *diel*, but many are also found among the Eastern Jikany tribes and elsewhere. Likewise, most GAAWAR live in Gaawar country, but they are also found in most, perhaps all, Nuer tribes. Tribes are territorial groups with an unbroken social extension, whereas clans are kinship groups dispersed far and wide. Consequently a tribe is a community and can have corporate functions, but a clan is never a community and can never act corporately. The Lou tribe unite for war. The JINACA never unite. Also a man can change his tribe by changing his place of residence, but he can never change his clan. A

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Lou man who goes to live in Gaawar country becomes a Gaawar man. A JINACA man remains a NAC wherever he lives.

(3) A clan is, as we have earlier emphasized, not numerically preponderant in the tribe where it is dominant, e.g. the JINACA are only a small minority in the Lou tribe and the GAAJOK lineage are only a small minority in the Gaajok tribe.

(4) A man is a *dil*, aristocrat, only in the one tribe where his clan has superior status. Thus a *dil Leegni*, an aristocrat of the Leek tribe, is an aristocrat there and nowhere else. If he goes to live in Bul country or in one of the Jikany countries he is no longer a *dil* but a *rul*, stranger. In the same way a member of the JINACA is a *dil* in Lou country, but if he goes, as many of his clan do, to reside in Gaajok country, he is not a *dil* there but a stranger, *rul*. The JINACA are *diel* Looka, but the GAAJOK are *diel* Gaajok. The status of *diel* is dependent on residence on land owned by their clan. The only exception to this statement is to be found in such cases where a clan is dominant in two or more tribes, e.g. the JINACA in Lou and Rengyan and the GAATGANKIIR in the Jikany countries to the west and to the east of the Bahr el Jebel. If a man of the JINACA moves from Rengyan to Lou he still remains a *dil*, because both countries belong to his clan. Likewise a man of the GAAJOK lineage of the GAATGANKIIR can move from Gaajok to Gaagwang, or Gaajak, country, on either side of the Nile, and still remain a *dil*, for various lineages of his clan are dominant in all these tribes.

Like most words which denote sociological status, *dil* is used by Nuer in various contexts with various meanings. In this book it is used with the precise meaning given to it in the preceding paragraphs. It is, however, permissible to use the word to denote a true member of any lineage, whether dominant in the tribe or not. For example, the JUAK lineage of the Leek tribe are of Dinka origin and are not *diel Leegni*, but a man who dwells among them can obviously be either a *dil Juaka*, a true member of the JUAK lineage, or a person who has attached himself to them for some reason or other. In the same manner one may speak of a *dil* JIMEM, although there is no tribe in which the JIMEM have the status of *diel*, for a man may be a true member of the clan or a Dinka who has attached himself to it. Also a member of the JINACA who leaves Lou and settles in Gaajok still remains a *gat dila Looka*, a child of Lou aristocracy, and will call himself such, meaning that when he is in Lou country he is an aristocrat.

The words '*tut*' or '*gat twot*', son of a bull, are used in the same 614
manner as '*dil*' and '*gat dila*'. Here again a man may be a *tut* of
his lineage, in contrast to accretions of strangers and Dinka who 619
live in the district associated with it, without being a *tut* of the 565
tribe of which that district forms part, e.g. a man may be a *tut* of the Jaajoah secondary section of the Lou tribe without being a *tut Looka*, because the aristocratic clan of the whole of Lou country are the JINACA, and the JAAJOAH are not members of this clan. In other words a man may call himself a *tut* of the Jaajoah to emphasize that he is a JAAJOAH and not merely a Jaajoah, but he does not thereby imply that he is a *tut Looka*. In a still more general sense *tut* may, as we have noted, merely mean a paterfamilias or even a male person. One must judge from the context how the expression should be translated. In this book we use the words *tut* or *gat twot* in the sense, defined on pp. 179–80, of an elder, and we use the word *dil* to refer to a tribal aristocrat.

It is difficult to find an English word that adequately describes 619
the social position of *diel* in a tribe. We have called them aristo-
crats, but do not wish to imply that Nuer regard them as of superior 565
rank, for, as we have emphatically declared, the idea of a man 554
lording it over others is repugnant to them. On the whole—we will qualify the statement later—the *diel* have prestige rather than rank and influence rather than power. If you are a *dil* of the tribe in which you live you are more than a simple tribesman. You are one of the owners of the country, its village sites, its pastures, its fishing pools and wells. Other people live there in virtue of marriage into your clan, adoption into your lineage, or of some other social tie. You are a leader of the tribe and the spear-name of your clan is invoked when the tribe goes to war. Wherever there is a *dil* in a village, the village clusters around him as a herd of cattle clusters around its bull.

I have described the position of *diel* as I judged it to be among the Lou tribe. I had the impression that to the west of the Nile their status was less pronounced, whereas among the Eastern Jikany tribes, on the periphery of Nuer expansion, it was more emphasized. In the Karlual area of the Leek tribe, the only part of western Nuerland I know more than superficially, the aristocratic prestige of a *dil* is recognized, but there are clans of strangers so well and long entrenched in the districts and villages in which they are found to-day that a *dil* has no legal privilege.

≢ [See cat. 116 — Analyst]

619 565 554 At a cursory glance, I gathered that conditions were elsewhere the same in western Nuerland, except, perhaps, among the Jikany where the status of *diel* may be more enhanced. Among the Eastern Jikany one finds the greatest insistence on social differentiation and legal privilege. The category of *diel* tends to be more stressed in the larger tribes than in the smaller, and when its structural function has been examined it will be understood why this is so.

613 621 563 565 In a Nuer village or cattle camp there are seldom more than a few families of *diel*. Most people are either *rul*, Nuer of other clans, or *jaang*, persons of Dinka descent who have not been adopted into Nuer lineages. A *rul* is a Nuer who in a certain tribe is not a *dil*, though he may be a *dil* in another tribe. I have already described how lineages split off from their localized kinship groups, wander, join persons of other clans, and become members of a new community. This process was well described to me by a man of the Dok tribe. Members of a lineage beget children and they become numerous and spread over the countryside, wandering here, there, and everywhere. Then their close relationship ends and they go to live in the midst of other clans who are distantly related to them. Here they dwell as friends and slowly forge new cognatic relationships by intermarriage. Hence lineages are much mixed in all local communities.

613 565 554 Also Nuer say that no *dil* dwells in a social milieu composed entirely of fellow aristocrats, for lineages of *diel* split up and segments seek autonomy by becoming the nuclei of new social agglomerations in which they are the aristocratic element. Thus lineages of *diel* split up not only on account of internal dissension, but because a man of personality likes to found his independent settlement where he will be an important person rather than remain a younger brother in a group of influential elder relatives. I was told that this process by which any man, especially a *dil*, could become a local leader is felt to be ingrained in their social system and is a reason why they object to the creation by the Government of a few local 'chiefs' whose position tends to become formalized, permanent, and hereditary. To them this is a rigid interpretation of status, based on territorial rather than personal qualifications, which stabilizes the superiority of a single man or lineage. Every man of standing feels that

PLATE XXIII

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a. Section of camp kraal (Lou)

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b. Sobat river in the dry season (Lou)

[Face p. 216]

613 he should be a 'chief'. It does not follow that a man must be
565 an aristocrat to gain influence among his fellow villagers. He
may be a *tut* of some other lineage than the dominant one of his
554 tribe who, by outstanding character, has been able to establish
himself and his kin as social leaders in his locality.

There is thus in every tribe some differentiation of status, but the people so differentiated do not constitute classes, and 'strangers' and 'Dinka' are properly to be regarded as categories rather than as groups. Their relation to the aristocrats in the tribal system and the ways in which the different elements are integrated into communities will engage our attention in later sections.

VII

565 It is only in assessment of blood-cattle that social differentiation
between aristocrats and Nuer strangers is of great significance, and
628 then only among the Jikany tribes, principally among the Eastern
681 Jikany. Among the Eastern Jikany the kinsmen of a *dil*, aristocrat,
who was killed had to be compensated by payment of more cattle
563 than the kinsmen of a slain *rul*, stranger, or *jaang*, Dinka. It is not
easy to know to what extent this privilege could be enforced, or even to discover the relative assessments of blood-cattle. There was undoubtedly considerable elasticity in reckoning who counted as equivalent to a *dil* in situations of homicide and variation in the number of cattle paid for homicide. It was asserted by several informants that in pre-government days a true Nuer, called in the Jikany tribes a *gat Geeka*, counted the same as a *dil* Jikany for purposes of assessing blood-cattle, and I was given the following blood-cattle assessments: a Jikany aristocrat, 40, a Nuer stranger, 40, a Dinka adopted by a Jikany aristocrat, 20, a Dinka who had been adopted by a Nuer stranger, 20, and an unadopted Dinka, 6. In more recent practice the following payments seem to have been regarded as usual: a Jikany aristocrat, 20, a Nuer stranger, 17, a Dinka who has settled permanently in the country, 16, a Dinka who has not been long settled, 10.

I was not long enough among the Eastern Jikany to investigate this matter thoroughly, but I received the impression that the second list was coloured in its variation of assessment, as it was certainly influenced in amounts of assessment, by recent Government decisions; though the informants who gave it insisted that it was in proportion to the ancient assessments. Aristocrats assured me that in the past more cattle were always paid for the homicide of an aristocrat than for that of a Nuer stranger. Members

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of Nuer clans, other than the GAATGANKIIR, who have settled in Jikany tribes equally assured me that the payments were the same for both. No doubt they were both hoping to influence Government practice by their statements. On the whole, I consider that among the Eastern Jikany there was probably a difference between payments for homicide of an aristocrat and of a stranger, but that there was much flexibility in the assessments, which depended generally on the special circumstances of each case: the length of the dead man's residence in the country, marriage alliances between his family and aristocratic lineages, the strength of his lineage and local community, whether he had been killed by a member of his village or by a man of another village, and so forth. Probably the same is true of the Western Jikany tribes, where I was told that the customary compensation for an aristocrat was from 40 to 50 head of cattle, for a stranger or Dinka who had settled in the country, 30, and for a Dinka who was staying there but had not yet built a homestead, 20. The practice of the Jikany is not typical of Nuerland as a whole.

Nevertheless, all over Nuerland Nuer and Dinka were differentiated by assessment of their value in blood-cattle, though the definition of a Dinka, in this respect, varied in different tribes. Among the Lou the practice was to reckon aristocrats and strangers together at 40 head of cattle. A Dinka who was born in Lou country was said to have become a Nuer (*caa nath*) and a member of the community in which he was living (*caa ran wec*), so that his life also was assessed at 40 head of cattle. On the other hand, a Dinka who had been captured in war and brought to Lou country was reckoned at 16 head of cattle, while a Dinka visiting relatives or affines in Lou country was reckoned at only 6 head of cattle. I was told that a Dinka who had been adopted held an inferior position in this respect to that held by his children, who counted as true Nuer. In the Jagei tribes Nuer strangers and Dinka who were permanent members of a community appear to have been reckoned at 40 head of cattle, like an aristocrat, while a stranger or a Dinka who had not built a byre was reckoned at only 10.

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The building of a byre was stressed because a man who built a homestead in a village had clearly the intention of remaining there and the community gained by an addition to its herd. Such a man seems to have been reckoned equal to an aristocrat in all parts of Nuerland, except among the

Jikany where, I was told, a Dinka could never lose his inferior 565
status, which was transmitted to his descendants. The acceptance 563
of a permanent member of a community as equal to an
aristocrat conforms to the general tendency among the Nuer
for descent to be subordinated to community, a tendency which
we shall constantly stress.

We again emphasize the point to which we drew attention in 628
the section on law, that the degree of responsibility acknowledged 681
for a tort, the chances of compensation being offered for it, and
the amount of compensation paid, depend on the relations of 592
the persons concerned in social structure. Thus, if a man kills 563
an unadopted Dinka of his own household, who was not born
in Nuerland, there is no redress, but his household will protect 609
their Dinka against outsiders and will avenge his death at their
hands. Dol, who is himself of Dinka descent, told me: 'If you
curse a Dinka of your household, well, you curse him, that is
all. If he is angry you tell him that you will kill him and that
nothing will happen. You will merely clean your spear on the
ground and hang it up. But if another man curses a Dinka of
your household you fight him, for the Dinka is your brother.
You ask the man whether he is your Dinka or his Dinka.'

The position of a Dinka in his own domestic circle is thus different from his position in relation to members of a wider group. He is only a *jaang* to the joint family which considers him 'their man.' To people standing outside this joint family he is a member of that *gol*, joint family, and it is not their business to differentiate his status within it. I was told that if an outsider called such a Dinka '*jaang*', the sons of the man who had captured him would resent the insult and might start a fight to wipe it out, for to them he is '*demar*', 'my brother', in relation to outsiders. They ask, 'Who is a *jaang*? Did your father seize him or did ours?' The acceptance of Dinka born in Nuerland as full members of Nuer households, hamlets, and villages is even more pronounced.

The status of Dinka is thus a relative one, and a man may be 628
considered to belong to this category in one situation and not in 681
another. This is obviously the case in social life generally,
because ordinarily no one differentiates a man of Dinka descent 563
from a man of Nuer descent, but we believe that it was also the

628 681 563 case in questions of homicide, since the social situation was composed of the structural relations of the slayer and his kin to the dead man and to other people concerned in the dispute. In our opinion the uncertainty and contradiction which was often evident in the statements of Nuer about assessments of blood-cattle is to be accounted for by relativity of status, it being relative always to the structural distance between persons, and therefore not rigidly definable.

628 681 621 Likewise *rul* is a very plastic concept. If a Leek man goes to Gaajak country to steal cattle and is killed no compensation would be paid for the homicide. A Leek man travelling through Gaajak country without intent to cause loss to its owners would not wantonly be slain. If the man were visiting kinsmen or affines and was killed in a quarrel, his hosts would consider that they were under an obligation to avenge him, though, perhaps, not under a very strong obligation. But a Leek man who has built his homestead in Gaajak country and has married into the village where he resides is a member of that community. If another member of his village kills him, it may be held that he is a *rul* and therefore his death may be paid for with fewer cattle than that of an aristocrat. But if a member of another village kills him, his community are not likely to accept this definition of status, because one does not differentiate between members of one's community on grounds of descent in its relation with other political segments. In political relations community ties are always dominant and determine behaviour.

VIII

✓597 563 619 We have observed that within a tribe there are three categories of persons: *diel*, *rul*, and *jaang*. The *diel* are an aristocratic clan, numerically swamped in the tribe by strangers and Dinka, but providing a lineage structure on which the tribal organization is built up. The problem is how strangers and Dinka are attached to the dominant clan in such a way that the clan becomes, through the relations of other members of the tribe to it, the framework of the political system. As Nuer reckon all social ties in a kinship idiom it is clear that only the recognition of mutual bonds of kinship could lead to this result. Such recognition is accorded in several ways. We will start by

an examination of adoption. A Nuer cannot be adopted into a 597c
lineage other than that into which he is born, so that the custom 563
concerns only Dinka.

We have already described how Nuer scorn Dinka and persistently raid them, but they do not treat those Dinka who are 619
permanent members of their community differently from its Nuer members, and we have seen that persons of Dinka descent form probably at least half the population of most tribes. These Dinka are either children of captives and immigrants who have been brought up as Nuer, or are themselves captives and immigrants who are residing permanently among Nuer. They are '*Jaang-Nath*', 'Dinka-Nuer', and, it is said, '*caa Nath*', 'they have become Nuer'. As we have explained, once their membership of a community is recognized, in most of Nuerland, their legal status is the same as that of a free-born Nuer, and it is only in relation to ritual and rules of exogamy that attention is drawn to their origin. In structural relations of a political kind they are undifferentiated members of a segment. Although in his domestic and kinship relations a Dinka has not so strong a position as a Nuer, because he has not the same range of kinship links, I have never observed that they suffer any serious disabilities, far less degradation. In answer to my question whether a captured Dinka would not work harder in the kraal than a son of the family, I was told that he was a son and would enjoy the same privileges as the other sons, being given an ox by his father at initiation and, later, bride-cattle for a wife. The only foreigners who suffer serious social inequality are certain small pockets of Dinka and Anuak who have been conquered but not absorbed into Nuer society and culture. Such pockets, like the Balak Dinka and the Anuak on the Sobat river, enjoy neither the privileges of Nuer citizenship nor the freedom of foreigners. Such pockets do not truly constitute part of a Nuer tribe.

Captured Dinka boys are almost invariably incorporated into 597
the lineage of their Nuer captors by the rite of adoption, and
they then rank as sons in lineage structure as well as in family 613
relations, and when the daughters of that lineage are married they receive bride-cattle. A Dinka boy is brought up as a child of his captor's household. He is already incorporated into the family and joint family by his acceptance as a member of these

597 613 groups by their other members and by outsiders. People say '*caa dil e cieng*' or '*caa ran wec*', 'he has become a member of the community', and they say of the man who captured him that 'he has become his father', and of his sons that 'they have become his brothers'. He is already a member of the *gol*, the household and joint family. Adoption gives him a position in lineage structure, and thereby ceremonial status, for by adoption he becomes a member of his captor's *thok dwiel*, lineage.

597 788 I was told that the captor will seldom himself give the lad *buth*, agnatic affiliation to his lineage, and that the rite is usually performed by a kinsman at the request of his sons and with the consent of their minimal lineage. A representative of the lineage invites the Dinka, now grown-up and initiated, to attend the sacrifice of an ox or sheep in his kraal. The head of the joint family provides the sacrificial beast and the representative of the lineage drives the tethering-peg into the earth at the entrance to the byre and walks up and down the kraal invoking the spear-name of the clan and calling on the spirits and ancestral ghosts of the lineage to take note that the Dinka is now a member of it and under their protection. He then spears the beast and the Dinka is smeared with the undigested contents of its stomach while the ghosts and spirits are asked to accept him. He is especially smeared on the soles of his feet, for this binds him to his new home. If he leaves it he will die. The beast is then cut up, and a son of the house, or the representative of the lineage, and his new brother divide the skin and the scrotum, which the Dinka cuts. The Dinka also takes the neck as his portion. On all future occasions when animals are sacrificed by members of the lineage the Dinka will receive his share of the meat, for he is now a member of the lineage. The cutting of the scrotum is the symbolic act which makes the man a member of the lineage, because only an agnatic relative may cut the scrotum of a sacrificial beast. 'A man who has cut the scrotum of your beast, if he [illegible] sexual relations with your daughter, he will die.'

613 597 [583] A girl captive is not adopted into the lineage, but people say '*caa lath cungni*', 'she is given a right to receive bride-wealth'. 'Her children are become people who partake in the bride-cattle'. This means that when she is married, or her daughters are married, the sons of the family in which she has been brought up will receive the cattle due to brothers and maternal uncles, and that in return, when the daughters of the sons and daughters of this family are married, she, or her sons, can claim the cow due to the paternal aunt and the cow due to the maternal aunt. She has become a daughter to her captor and a sister to his sons, but she is not a member of their lineage.

PLATE XXIV

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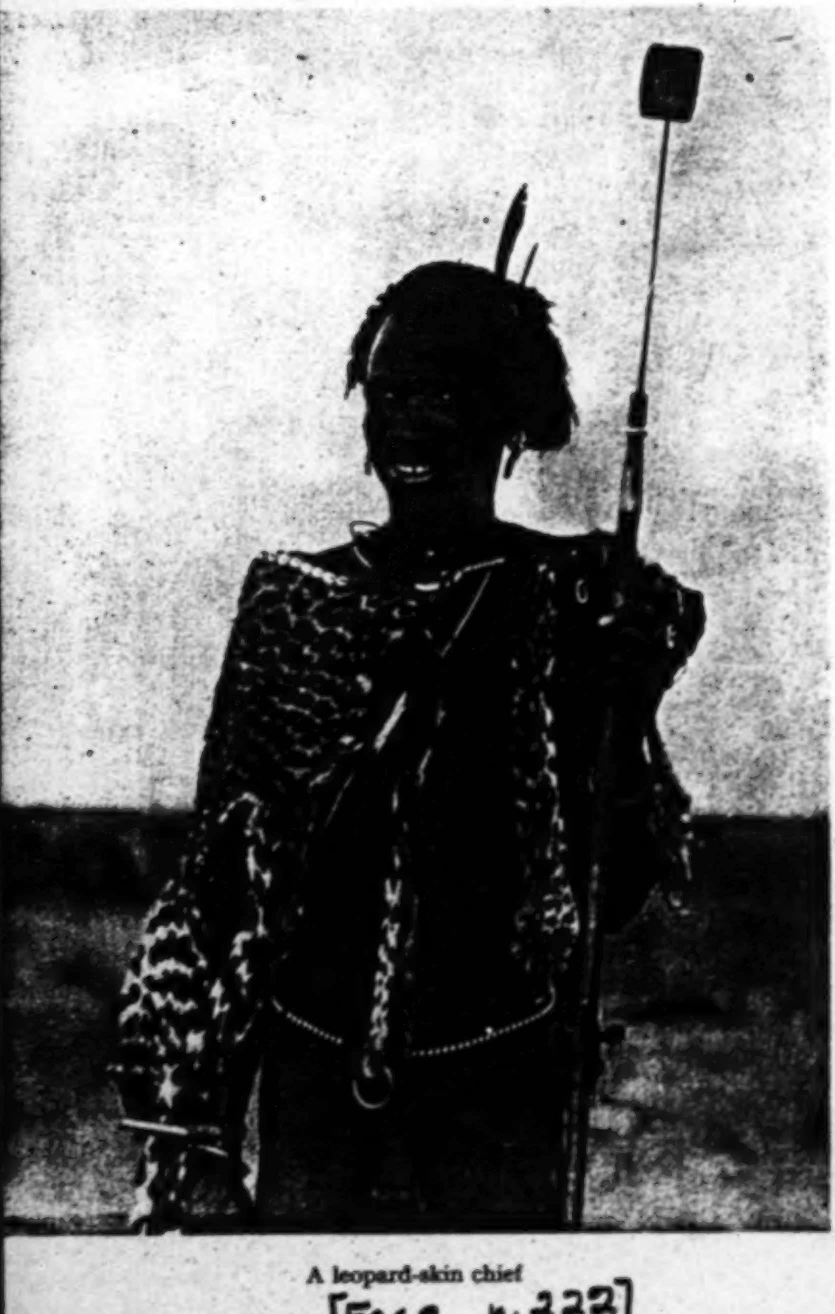

A leopard-skin chief

[Face p. 222]

613 597 By adoption Dinka men are grafted on to the lineage of their captors. They trace their ascent up the lineage to its ancestor and they become a new point of its growth. The fusion is complete and final. The spirits of the lineage become their spirits, its ghosts become their ghosts, and its spear-name and honorific name become their symbols. Indeed it is almost impossible without a prolonged stay in a Nuer village or camp to discover who are and who are not of pure Nuer origin. I have for weeks considered men to be true Nuer, whereas they were descended from captured Dinka, for a man whose Dinka grandfather had been adopted into a Nuer lineage regards himself as being just as much a member of the lineage as the man whose grandfather adopted his grandsire, and he is so regarded by other members of the lineage and by persons not of it. Thus, when a man gives his descent from E through D and C, and another man gives his descent from E through J and K, one naturally assumed that D and J were sons of E. There is no means of knowing that, in fact, J was a captured Dinka who was adopted into the lineage, unless someone volunteers the information—a most unlikely happening in Nuerland. Moreover, it is impolite to ask strangers whether their grandfathers were captured Dinka, and, even if they were of Dinka origin, they would not readily say so. One can, of course, always ask other people; but only those who are members of the same lineage are likely to be fully acquainted with the man's ancestry, and they, in all probability, will not tell one if he is of Dinka origin, for he is their agnatic kinsman as far as outsiders are concerned.

563 609 A very large number of Dinka in all tribes have been incorporated by adoption into Nuer lineages. Since, as mentioned later, adopted Dinka and their descendants can marry into collateral lineages, it would not be accurate to say that they are adopted into clans. Probably most captured Dinka were adopted into Nuer lineages, but there are also many Dinka lineages descended from men who came of their own free will to settle in Nuerland, either to escape famine, largely caused by Nuer raiding, in their own country, to visit captured sisters, or to reoccupy the sites from which Nuer raids had ousted them. Such immigrants were unmolested and were permitted to settle or return to Dinkaland as they might choose. A Dinka who decided to settle

563 609 became some Nuer's *jaang*, his Dinka, and *rande*, his man, and the Nuer would give him an ox and maybe a cow or two when he had given proof of his fidelity and attachment to his new home. I was told that he might even be given a daughter of the house in marriage without payment of bride-wealth if she were blind or lame and no Nuer would contemplate taking her as a bride. Often a widow lives in concubinage with such a Dinka, who thus obtains a 'wife' in the sense of cook, housekeeper, and mate; and even if the children she may bear him do not count as his descendants he can gain their affection. If a Dinka settles at the home of the husband of his sister, the husband may give him a cow or two in acknowledgement of affinity.

There must also have been pockets of the original Dinka occupants of country overrun by the Nuer who submitted and gave up their language and habits in favour of those of the Nuer. At any rate, there are to-day in all tribes many small Dinka lineages, and villages are often called after them. Such lineages are numerically preponderant in the communities where I spent most of my time, Yakwac camp and Nyueny village. The way in which these lineages are woven into the lineage texture of the dominant clan of the tribe is discussed in the next two sections.

Here we summarise points which have already emerged from our description of the position of Dinka in relation to Nuer. (1) *Jaang*, Dinka, has many meanings: any foreigners whom the Nuer habitually raid; Dinka living in Dinkaland and raided by Nuer; Dinka of unabsorbed pockets in Nuerland or on its confines; recent Dinka immigrants; certain clans which are said to be Dinka in origin, e.g. the GAATGANKIIR; members of small Dinka lineages which are Nuer in every character except in origin; descendants of adopted Dinka; adopted Dinka. One can only judge the meaning Nuer attach to the word by its context and the tone in which it is spoken. (2) It is only those Dinka who are regarded as members of a Nuer tribe who concern our present discussion. Their status is relative to the social situation in which the question of status arises, and cannot be rigidly defined. (3) Nuer conquest has not led to a class or symbiotic system, but, by the custom of adoption, has absorbed the conquered Dinka into its kinship system, and through

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the kinship system has admitted them into its political structure 609
on a basis of equality.

IX

A large number of Dinka who were not captured as children 563
are not adopted into Nuer lineages, and Nuer strangers cannot 609
be adopted into lineages of the dominant clan or into any other
Nuer lineages. Nevertheless, members of all local communities, 602
whilst they see themselves as distinct segments in relation to
other local segments, express their relations to one another in
terms of kinship. This is brought about by intermarriage.

We mention the rules of exogamy as briefly as possible and 563
only in so far as they have a direct bearing on the political 609
system. Nuer generally marry within their tribe, though they
sometimes marry women of other tribes, especially if they live 582
near the border. Sometimes, also, a man marries in one tribe
and then, taking his wife and family with him, goes to live in
another tribe. In recent times there have been occasional
marriages with the Ngok, and possibly with other Dinka tribes.
There are no exogamous rules based on locality. They are
determined by lineage and kinship values. A man may not marry
into his clan and, *a fortiori*, into his lineage. In most clans a
man may marry into his mother's clan, but not into her maximal
lineage, though this rule is less exact. A man may not marry
any woman to whom he is in any way closely related. A Dinka
adopted into a lineage may not marry into that lineage, but
may marry into collateral lineages of the same clan.

The rules of exogamy have been cursorily described. Never- 582
theless we consider them important, for the values which chiefly 602
regulate behaviour between one person and another in Nuer
society are kinship values. Nuer rules of exogamy break down 621
the exclusiveness of agnatic groups by compelling their members
to marry outside them, and thereby to create new kinship ties.
As the rules also forbid marriage between near cognates, a small
local community like a village rapidly becomes a network of
kinship ties and its members are compelled to find mates outside it. Any stranger who enters the village, if he is not already
related to most of its members, rapidly enters into affinal
relations with them and his children become their kinsmen.
Consequently the population of a Nuer village or cattle camp

582 602 621 can be placed on a single genealogical chart showing lines of descent and affinity, and, since affinity is fundamentally a relationship through kinship, we may say that all members of a village or camp are united by kinship ties and, therefore, are generally unable to marry into it. Consequently they are forced to take spouses from neighbouring villages of their district. Normally a man marries a girl who lives within visiting distance of his village. Hence a network of kinship ties stretches over a district and links in diverse ways the members of distinct political groups.

Looked at from the angle of a single village the circle of close kinship relations is limited to a small radius, and they tend to become fewer and more distant the nearer its periphery is approached. But the circumference of one such circle is intersected by other circles, so that there is no limit to the extension of a continuous series of kinship links. Exogamous rules, therefore, prevent the formation of autonomous agnatic groups and create extensive kinship ties within, and beyond, the tribal structure. Thus the kinship system bridges the gaps in political structure by a chain of links which unite members of opposed segments. They are like elastic bands which enable the political segments to fall apart and be in opposition and yet keep them together. This relation between kinship and political structure poses a set of complex problems. Here we wish to demonstrate only one point: the way in which dominant lineages serve as a political framework by the accretion of other lineages to them within local communities.

613 621 We have seen how every local community is associated with a lineage and that the members of this lineage who live in the community are numerically swamped by members of other lineages. We have also seen how all members of the community are in some way or other related by kinship. What gives a pattern to this complicated criss-crossing of cognatic threads is their relation to the dominant lineage of the community.

The Nuer have a category of *gaat nyiet*, children of girls, which includes all persons who are in the relationship of sister's son and daughter's son to a lineage. As a whole lineage can be spoken of as *gaat nyiet* to another if there is one such female link between them anywhere in the lines of their descent, 613 621 and as there must be such a link if they live in the same community, owing to the rules of exogamy, it follows that people who live together are all *gaat nyiet* to one another. However, it is in relation to the dominant lineage of a community that the concept is mainly employed and is politically important. When people are not members of this lineage it is stressed that they are *gaat nyiet* to it. Nuer of other clans can never more closely identify themselves with the dominant lineage, because, for ritual reasons, they must remain autonomous units, but politically they accrete themselves to it through this kinship category. Moreover, outside ritual situations, being *gaat nyiet* to a dominant lineage gives people complete equality with it, and their accretion to it is often expressed in terms of lineage structure, so that a man will often give his ascent to the woman of the dominant lineage who bore one of his ancestors, and thus graft himself, through her, on to their tree of descent; though this is more usually done by Dinka than by Nuer. It is, however, the common practice for children of strangers who have been brought up at the home of their maternal kinsmen, who are aristocrats, to regard themselves as members of their mother's lineage, except in ceremonial situations, and to consider its members, rather than their father's lineage, as their true kinsmen.

613 621 609 Dinka who have not been adopted commonly trace their ascent to a female Nuer forebear and through her they graft themselves into a Nuer lineage and are accepted as members of it in ordinary social relations. Thus a Dinka often gives his ascent to the dominant lineage of his community through a woman, and sometimes through two or three female links, and though this is generally evident from female prefixes it cannot always be known. These Dinka individuals incorporate themselves into the structure of a Nuer lineage through their mothers, since they have no lineage structure of their own. This is different from the stressing of a female link (*gaat nyiet*) which unites a group of Nuer strangers or of Dinka to the dominant lineage of their tribal section and also from matrilineal modes of reckoning descent due to matrilocal conditions of residence, which may be temporary. [611] [591]

613 621 Owing to exogamous rules lineages are thus linked by

613 -621 innumerable cognatic ties, so that however many lineages there may be in a local community their members are all related to one another by some kind of cognation and affinity. A lineage remains an exclusive agnatic group only in ritual situations. In other situations it is merged in the community, and cognation (*mar*) takes the place of lineage agnation (*buth*) as the value through which people living together express their relations to one another. The agnatic structure of the dominant lineage is not stressed in ordinary social relations, but only on a political plane where relations between territorial segments are concerned, for the assimilation of territorial segments to segments of the dominant lineage means that the interrelations of the one are expressed in terms of the other.

In every small tribal segment there is a lineage of the dominant clan of the tribe associated with it, and the members of the segment are joined to this lineage by adoption, cognatic kinship, or kinship fictions, in such a way that one may speak of them as an accretion around a lineage nucleus. As these different nuclei are lineages of the same clan, or, as we shall see in the next section, assimilated to it, the structure of the dominant clan is to the political system like the anatomical structure to the system of an organism.

X

600 We have seen how *Dinka* and strangers are linked to the framework of the dominant clan by adoption and cognation and how these links form an embracing kinship system which provides the non-political texture of the political system. Kinship values are the strongest sentiments and norms in Nuer society and all social interrelations tend to be expressed in a kinship idiom. Adoption and the assimilation of cognatic to agnatic ties are two ways in which community relations are translated into kinship relations: in which living together forces residential relations into a kinship pattern. A third way is by mythological creation of kinship fictions, and this way is appropriate to relations between dominant lineages and stranger and Dinka groups, living with them in the same tribal segments, which are too large and occupy too distinct a territory for incorporation by either of the other two methods. It is the way

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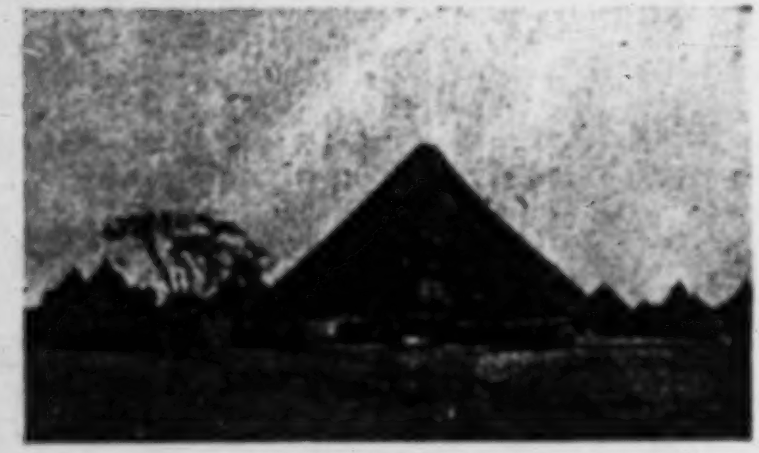
PLATE XXV



a. Ngundeng's pyramid (Lou)

b. Ngundeng's pyramid (Lou)

[Face p. 228]

608 -609 in which large pockets of strangers and Dinka are incorporated into the conceptual scheme of a tribe.

563 773 It has frequently been emphasised that political relations are often expressed in speech as lineage relations, in the sense that one talks of a local community as though it were a lineage, thereby assimilating to a dominant lineage those who share the same community life with it; and that lineage relations are often expressed as political relations, in the sense that one talks of a lineage as though it were identical with the local community in which it is only a nucleus, thereby depriving the lineage of its unique agnatic status and giving it a general residential value. In conformity with this way of describing community interrelations, they are personified in myths and derived from personal relationships of a kinship kind.

613 773 173 We do not propose to give a collection of Nuer myths. We have so far only mentioned one myth explaining group interrelations: that which tells why the Nuer raid the Dinka. There are very few myths of this general kind. Most relate to clans and lineages in their corporate territorialised form and explain their association with one another as tribes and tribal segments, particularly the relations between dominant lineages and large stranger lineages living with them. We are not always able to explain mythological relations by the present-day political system, but this can often be done, and where we fail to do it we attribute our inability to ignorance, especially to ignorance of tribal history.

The two large Lou tribal sections, the Jimac and the Jaajoah which appear on the map on p. 56, but not on the clan tree of the JINACA, the dominant clan of the tribe, on p. 196, are divisions called after the JIMAC and JAAJOAH lineages. They are said to be *gaat nyiet*, children of daughters of the founder of the JINACA clan, and there is a myth accounting for this maternal link. Denac was said to have had, according to the Lou story, four sons, named Yin, Dak, Bal, and Bany, by one wife, and Nyang and two nameless brothers by a second wife. These wives are sometimes said to have been called Nyagun and Nyamor and the two primary sections of the tribe, Gun and Mor, to be named after them. Nyang's two brothers were eaten by an ogre. When, afterwards, the sons of Denac went fishing, the four sons of one mother went by themselves and Nyang by himself, for he would not accompany his half-

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brothers, but pined for the sons of his mother. When he caught a fish someone would come and steal it from him, for he was all by himself and only a boy. When he came home he would not sit with the other boys facing his father, but sat apart with his back to him, and when his father asked him why he was troubled he replied that he was thinking of his brothers whom the ogre had eaten. His father said to him, 'Never mind, take your two sisters and let them be your brothers.' So when Nyang went fishing he was accompanied by his sisters Nyabil and Fadwai. Nyang is the founder of the GAALIEK lineage, Nyabil of the JIMAC lineage, and Fadwai of the JAAJOAH lineage. These lineages together form the kinship framework of the Mor primary section of the Lou tribe and the myth explains their association. This maternal link has not prevented intermarriage between the GAALIEK and the JIMAC. Apart from questions of ritual and exogamy the descendants of Nyabil and Fadwai are treated as though these daughters had been sons, and they possess a mythological patent which gives them equal status in the tribe with the *diel*. In tracing their agnatic ascent members of these lineages do not go further back than their ancestress. From her they continue to her father, Denac.

In the Gaawar tribe there is an important JAKAR lineage which is mythologically attached to the GAAWAR, the aristocrats of the tribe, in the following manner. A man called Kar, or Jakar, descended from heaven by a rope that connected the sky with a tamarind tree, probably the tree in Lang country beneath which mankind is said to have been created. He was later followed by War, the founder of the GAAWAR clan, who was found sitting in the tree by Kar's sister who was gathering firewood accompanied by her dog. She returned to tell her brother that she had found a man whose head was covered in blood. Kar tried to persuade him to come to the village but he refused to do so. They then sacrificed an ox and roasted its flesh and the smell so attracted War, who was very greedy, that he climbed down the tree and entered the village. When he had eaten he wanted to return to heaven, but Kar cut the rope. Mr. B. A. Lewis has kindly furnished me with what he says is a less common version, found in the Gaawar tribe. War fell from heaven in a rainstorm and was discovered by a dog which belonged to Logh, but was with Kwec's wife when she was looking for wood in the forest and War was found. Kwec's wife took him home with her and a dispute arose between Kwec and Logh about the ownership of the foundling. Logh claimed War on the ground that it was his dog which had discovered him, and Kwec claimed him because his wife had found him. Then Kar joined in the discussion, saying that War was his brother.

This myth brings War and Kar and Logh into some kind of 613
relationship to one another and is to be explained by the fact that 773
the two main clans in the Gaawar tribe, next to the aristocratic
clan of the GAAWAR, are the JAKAR and the JALOGH. The JALOGH 173
are presumably the same clan as live to the south of Dok country where a small territory is named after them. Kwec was, doubtless, the founder of the KWEC lineage after whom a small territory, next to the Jalogh country, is named. We may surmise that, since both lineages are found in Gaawar country at the present day and in its present site to the east of the Nile, they also had close relations with the GAAWAR when all three clans lived in their homeland to the west of the Nile.

The richest clan mythology is that of the GAATGANKIIR, and it clearly illustrates the mythological integration of lineages of different origins to the dominant lineage system in a political structure, and shows how territorial relations are given a kinship value.

There are several versions of many of the incidents relating to Kir, the founder of the GAATGANKIIR clan, and we give an abridgement of one of these. A Dinka of the Ngok tribe, called Yul, saw a stalk of a gourd on a river bank and, having followed it a long way, arrived at a huge gourd. He cut this gourd open and out of it came Kir with various ritual objects. Yul's wife suckled the child as well as her own baby, Gying. When Kir grew up he turned out to be a witch and magician and the sons of Yul tried to kill him because his evil powers were destroying the cattle. Only Gying remained Kir's friend, and said to him, as he fled from Yul's home, that he would one day follow after him and join him.

In his flight Kir came to the Nile where he saw a man, called Tik, in the river and asked him for help. Tik struck the waters of the Nile and cut them in two and Kir crossed over to the west bank. Kir told Tik that when he had found a place to settle in Tik was to come after him. Tik accompanied Kir till they met a man of the Wot tribe who took them to his home where the JIDIET, the dominant clan of the Wot, sacrificed a black ox so that the lethal power of witchcraft might leave Kir's eyes and enable him to look at people and cattle without killing them. Kir then dug a hole for himself in a termite-mound near a cattle camp of the GAAWAR, where he performed many strange feats. Eventually the GAAWAR offered sacrifices and persuaded him to leave the mound and took him to their camp.

Kir was then given a wife, Nyakwini, who bore him Thiang before he killed her with his witchcraft. He then married Nyabor who bore him Kun. He likewise killed her. The people then gave him

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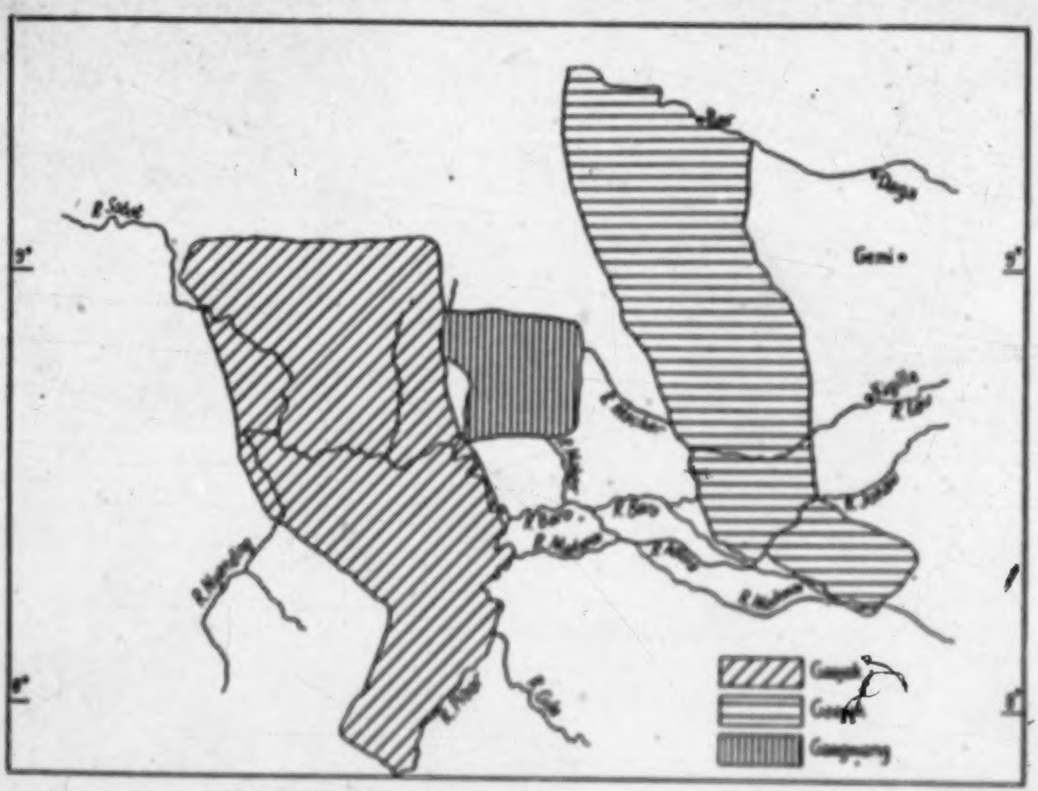
a lame woman, Duany, who bore him Jok. In Lou and Eastern Jikany versions the three wives were all daughters of Gee, the founder of the GAATGANGEEKA family of clans, and in versions to the west of the Nile the first two were GAAWAR and Duany a NYAPIK of the Bul tribe, but all accounts make Nyakwini and Nyabor more closely related to one another than either to Duany. After Duany had borne Jok she killed Kir with witchcraft, for she, also, was a witch. Later Thiang, her dead husband's eldest son, cohabited with her and begat Nyang.

In all the variants of the Kir myth the parts played by Gying and Tik are stressed. Gying was suckled with him and afterwards joined him and lived with him as a brother. When Kir died his eldest sons Thiang and Kun possessed cattle, but the youngest son, Jok, and Gying had no cattle. Thiang wanted to prevent Gying from acquiring cattle, but Kun gave him some, so Thiang said that Kun and Gying were to live together. Tik had saved Kir's life and had gone to live with him. There is a further story of how Gying and Tik were threatened by an ogre and shared a hut together and became like brothers, so that the lineages descended from these two men do not intermarry.

Without recording further details we may note how actual political relations are mythologically represented in the characters of these stories. The two largest segments of the Gaajak tribe which are named after nuclei of strangers are the Kong section, the stranger nucleus of which is a lineage descended from Tik, and the Dhilleŋ section, the stranger nucleus of which is a lineage descended from Gying, and these two sections live together as parts of the Reng primary section (see diagram on p. 240, and sketch-map on p. 58). The myth tells also how Jok and Nyang are sons of the same mother, Duany, Jok being begotten by Kir and Nyang by Thiang. This is a mythological representation of the structure of the Gaagwang tribe which has dominant lineage nuclei descended from both Nyang and Jok, and also of the political relations between the Gaagwang tribe and the Gaajok tribe, for these relations, especially to the west of the Nile, are of close alliance compared to the more distant relations between the Gaagwang tribe and the primary sections of the Gaajak tribe that also border them, the Thiang and the Reng. Thiang and Kun were begotten by Kir and borne by women who are generally represented as sisters, and the sections in which their descendants are dominant are the Thiang and Gaagwong primary sections of the Gaajak tribe, the third primary section of which, the Reng, has nuclei descended from Thiang, Gying, and Tik, whose relationships in the myth have already been noted.

[p. 233 contains no textual material]

[p. 233]


R. Sobat
R. Daga
Gemi
9°
8°
R. Baro
Gaajok
Gaajak
Gaagwang

The Eastern Jikany tribes. *(After Mr. C. L. Armstrong.)*

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613 773 173 In every Nuer tribe there are similar stories which explain the relations between the aristocratic clan and large stranger lineages living with it. Other myths explain the relations between these stranger lineages. Thus the lineages living at Nyueny and in neighbouring villages in Leek country, JUAK, NGWOL, JIKUL, &c., are all mythologically related to one another and to the dominant clan of the Leek tribe. These myths also explain the ritual symbols and observances of the lineages mentioned in them.

Actual interrelations of a political kind are thus explained and justified in mythological interrelations, and wherever, as far as we know, large lineages of different clans are politically associated there is a myth bringing their ancestors into some social relationship. This is especially the case between dominant lineages and stranger or Dinka lineages, and the mythological link gives them equality and fraternity in community life, while permitting ritual exclusiveness and intermarriage between them. Complete assimilation is impossible, for there must always be ritual distinction or the clan and lineage systems would collapse. Strangers have to be incorporated into the community of the dominant lineage and excluded from its agnatic structure.

XI

602 609 554 By adoption, the recognition of the equivalence of cognatic and agnatic ties in community life, and by mythological relationships, all persons in a tribal segment have kinship relationships of some kind to one another and the segments themselves are given a kinship relationship to each other within the political system. Although the categories of *diel*, *rul*, and *jaang* create social differentiation, it is on a ritual and domestic, rather than on a political, plane and is only indicated in certain situations of social life.

This is evident in the Nuer use of the three words denoting the three statuses. It is a common Nuer practice when addressing people and speaking publicly about them to use words which denote a closer relationship between them and the speaker than their actual relationship. This is commonly done with kinship terms and, also, in defining the status of a person in his tribe. Nuer do not emphasize that a man is a stranger or Dinka by

alluding to him as such in ordinary social life, for it is in rare 602
situations that his being other than an aristocrat is relevant: to 609
some extent in payment of blood-cattle, in questions of exogamy,
and at sacrifices and feasts. A stranger who has made his home 554
with aristocrats is treated as a social equal and regards himself as such. People do not call him a *rul*, for he is a member of their community. They may even refer to him as a *dil* out of politeness. In the same way people do not refer to an adopted Dinka as '*Jaang*'; for he is by adoption a brother of aristocrats or of Nuer of other lineages. One would not ordinarily speak of unadopted Dinka residents as '*Jaang*', but as '*rul*'. Just as strangers tend to be linguistically assimilated to aristocrats, so Dinka tend to be assimilated to strangers, and people speak only of unconquered Dinka of Dinkaland by the contemptuous expression '*Jaang*'. Nuer do not make distinctions of status between people who live with them, share their fights, partake of their hospitality, and are members of their community against other communities. Community of living overrides differentiation of descent.

We again emphasize that the designations 'aristocrat', 'stranger', and 'Dinka' in a Nuer tribe are relative terms, being defined by the relations of persons in the social structure in specific situations of social life. A man is a stranger, or Dinka, in reference to a few, mainly ritual, situations, but is not indicated as such on other occasions; and a man is a stranger or Dinka in relation to members of a social group, but is not considered by them to have a differentiated status in relation to another group. A stranger is a stranger to you, your stranger, but is one of you *vis-à-vis* other people. A Dinka is a Dinka to you, your Dinka, but he is your brother *vis-à-vis* other people. In political structure all members of a segment are essentially undifferentiated in its relation to other segments.

How can it be explained that among a people so democratic 619
in sentiment and so ready to express it in violence a clan is
given superior status in each tribe? We believe that the facts 614
we have recorded provide an answer in terms of tribal structure. 565
Many Nuer tribes are large in area and population—some of them very large—and they are more than territorial expressions, for we have shown that they have a complex segmentary structure which the Nuer themselves see as a system. As there are no

619 tribal chiefs and councils, or any other form of tribal govern-
ment, we have to seek elsewhere for the organizing principle
614 within the structure which gives it conceptual consistency and
565 a certain measure of actual cohesion, and we find it in aristocratic status. In the absence of political institutions providing central administration in a tribe and co-ordinating its segments, it is the system of lineages of its dominant clan which gives it structural distinctness and unity by the association of lineage values, within a common agnatic structure, with the segments of a territorial system. In the absence of a chief or king, who might symbolize a tribe, its unity is expressed in the idiom of lineage and clan affiliation.

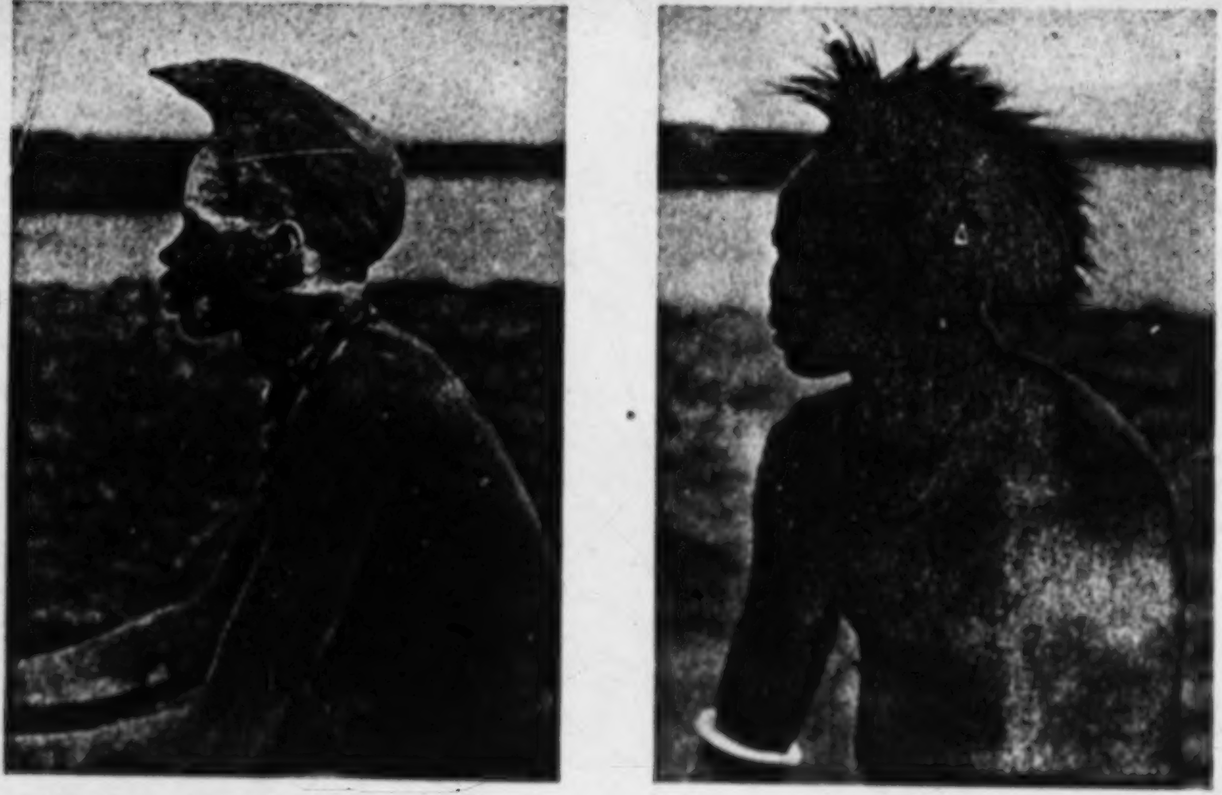
XII

619 In the Kir myth not only are the ancestors of important
614 lineages, and, through them, the lineages and the territorial
173 segments in which they are incorporated brought into relation-
773 ship, but the ancestors of clans, and, through them, the clans
and the tribes in which these clans are dominant, are linked together. Thus Kir, in various versions of the myth, is adopted by Gee, the founder of the GAATGANGKEKA family of clans; meets Wot, in whom the Wot tribe is personified; has relations with the GAAWAR; and so forth. The myth, thus, also mirrors intertribal relations and brings the whole of Nuerland into a single kinship structure, which we call the clan system as distinct from the lineage system of a clan.

173 The clan is the farthest range to which agnatic kinship is
773 traced when the marriage of two persons is in question, but
614 some clans have, nevertheless, an agnatic relationship to other
clans, though Nuer do not regard it quite in the same way as relationship between lineages of a clan. They give the impression, when speaking of the ancestor of a clan, that they regard him as an historical figure, clearly delineated against a background of tradition, while, when speaking of the ancestor of a family of clans, they seem to regard him as a vaguer figure obscured in the dimness of myth.

614 We here note again that the dominant lineages in more than
613 one tribe sometimes form part of the same clan structure. Thus,
619 the lineages dominant in the Gaajok, Gaajak, and Gaagwang

PLATE XXVI



a. Youth (Eastern Gaajak) with ash hair-dressing

b. Youth (Eastern Gaajok) after removal of ash hair-dressing

[Face p.236]

302

614 tribes, to the east and to the west of the Nile, are all segments
of the GAATGANKIIR clan. Also the dominant lineages of the
613 Rengyan tribe, to the west of the Nile, and the Lou tribe, to
619 the east of the Zeraf, are part of the JINACA clan. This distribution is easily accounted for, because we know that till recently

[415]

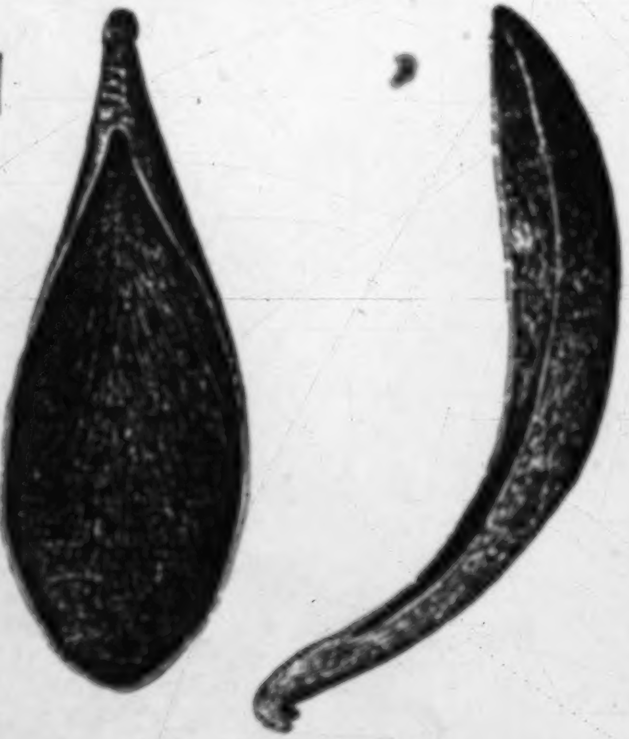


FIG. 14. Buffalo-horn spoons.

the Eastern GAATGANKIIR and the Eastern JINACA lineages lived with the other lineages of these clans in the Jikany and Rengyan areas to the west of the Nile.

There are also more general and mythological relationships between clans. In recounting these relationships Nuer personify
773 the tribes and give them a kinship value by assimilating them to their dominant clans. Thus, they speak of Bor, Lang, Lou, Thiang, Lak, &c., as though they were persons and could have kinship relations between them like those between persons, and as though all the members of these tribes were of the same

614 773 descent. By so doing they stress community relations and obscure clan differentiation in a political context. This habit often makes their statements appear confused, and even contradictory, but it accords with a strong tendency in social life, as we have seen in discussing the various meanings of the word '*cieng*', to identify the lineage system and the political system in a specific set of relations.

173 773 619 Many Nuer regard their ancestors Gee and Ghaak as the progenitors of all true Nuer, though one is given different classifications in different parts of Nuerland. Among the Lou it is said that all the tribes are descended from Gee, except the Jikany and Gaawar tribes. These two alone are differentiated because their proximity makes them significant for the Lou, whereas all the other tribes, which have no direct relations with the Lou, are vaguely classified as children of Gee. Among the Eastern Jikany all true Nuer tend to be classed as 'Gee' in contrast to 'Kir', the Jikany themselves. In the valley of the Zeraf and in Western Nuerland, where the tribes have a very much wider range of intertribal contacts, there is a wider range of differentiation. The Nuer tribes there fall into three classes: the Gee group, consisting of Bor, Lang, Rengyan, Bul, Wot, Ror, Thiang, and Lou, stretches in an unbroken line, from north-west to south-east, across the centre of Nuerland; the Ghaak group, consisting of Nuong, Dok, Jaloogh, Beegh, Gaankwac, and Rol, occupies the south-western part of Nuerland; and the Ril group, consisting of the Leek and Lak, occupies the lower reaches of the Zeraf and the Ghazal near their junction with the Nile. I have sometimes heard the Bul included in the Ril group. However, in Dok country and in adjacent tribal areas people further distinguish between the tribes elsewhere classed as sons of Ghaak and divide them into a Ghaak group, comprising Beegh, and Jaalogh, and a Gwea group, comprising Dok, Nuong, Gaankwac, and Rol.

614 619 In these classifications we note a further exemplification of what we have often observed elsewhere about Nuer classifications: their segmentary tendency and their relativity. Whilst, for example, other Nuer see the Dok and the Beegh as Ghaak they only see themselves as an undivided Ghaak group in opposition to the Gee fraternity and otherwise see themselves

as parts of opposed segments, Gwea and Ghaak. It will be noted 614
that these groups of tribes, often represented as families of 619
clans, occupy distinct sections of Nuerland. Before the period of eastwards migration they ran from north to south, in three or four groups, to the west of the Nile. Territorial contiguity and a common clan structure, such as we find among the Jikany tribes, or close relationship within a clan system, such as we find among the Ghaak group of tribes, go together, and the values of the two systems may be assumed to interact. The segmentation of lineages within a tribe in relation to its political segmentation is thus repeated in the whole clan system of the Nuer, the segments of which are co-ordinated with the political segmentation of Nuerland. Those tribes which are adjacent to one another have a common opposition to other groups of tribes and this relation is reflected in the tendency for them to be represented, through their dominant lineages and clans, as closely related on a mythological and ritual plane.

Gee and Ghaak and Gwea are represented as brothers, sons of 773
a mythological ancestor, sometimes called Ghau, the World, and 602
sometimes Ran, Map, whose father is said to be Kwoth, God. Ril is often described as one of their brothers as well, though he is sometimes represented to be a son of a daughter of Gee, called Kar.

All sons of Gee have agnatic kinship (*buth*) which allows them to partake of one another's sacrifices. In these ritual situations only the true sons of Gee, the JINACA, the GAATHIANG, and JIDIET, and other clans descended from Gee, have *buth* interrelationship, but in other situations the tribes in which these clans have a dominant status are represented as brothers or first cousins. Thus Thiang is said to have been the eldest son of Gee, Nac (Rengyan and Lou) the second son, Ror and other tribes younger sons; and Rengyan (Nac) and Wot (Dit) are said to have been twins, as also Bor and Lang, sons of Meat.

Some tribes stand outside this big family. The Jikany tribes 773
have dominant lineages of Dinka origin, descended from Kir, 602
who was found in a gourd by a man of the Ngok Dinka, but, as 619
was earlier explained, they are mythologically related to the Gee group, because Gee is variously represented as the protector or father-in-law of Kir. The GAATGANKIIR have a *buth* relationship with some lineage system of the Ngok Dinka, and there-

773 fore, in an unprecise political sense, the Jikany and Ngok Dinka
tribes have, by analogy, a fraternal relationship. It may safely
602 be assumed that at one time they had close intertribal relations.
619 The GAAWAR clan have also an independent origin, their ancestor
having descended from heaven. However, a number of mythological links unite him to the founders of various clans which are dominant in tribes of the Ghaak group (see pp. 230–1), and the Gaawar tribe therefore belongs to this group. Although the Nile now separates it from the other members of the group it was at one time their most northern extension on the west bank. Owing to *buth* relationship between GAAWAR and other clans of the family of clans descended from Kwook, Gaawar are said to go with the people of the Fadang section of the Bor tribe and the Atwot people, who are said to have lived at one time between the present Rengyan and Dok tribal areas.

Through the recognition of agnatic relationship between exogamous clans and of cognatic and mythological ties between clans not considered to be agnates, all the Nuer tribes are by assimilation of political to kinship values conceptualised as a single social system. A number of clans are not associated with tribes, but their lineages are included in this system by the affiliation of the clans to one or other of the large families of clans. Thus, the JIMEM, JIKUL, GAATLEAK, and JITHER are descended from Gee and belong to the Gee group; the JIKUL are mythologically attached to the Ril group and the JAKAR to the Ghaak group; and so on. The whole of the Nuer are brought into a single kinship or pseudo-kinship system and all the territorial segments of Nuerland are interconnected by that system.

XIII

619 In our view the unusual degree of genealogical segmentation
in the Nuer lineage system is to be understood in terms of tribal
613 structure, which is, as we have seen, characterised by its ten-
dency towards segmentation. The association of the lineage
614 system with the tribal system means that as the tribe splits into
segments so will the clan split into segments, and that the lines of cleavage will tend to coincide, for lineages are not corporate groups but are embodied in local communities through which they function structurally. Just as a man is a member of a tribal

segment opposed to other segments of the same order and yet also 619
a member of the tribe which embraces all these segments, so also
he is a member of a lineage opposed to other lineages of the same 613
order and yet also a member of the clan which embraces all 614
these lineages, and there is a definite correspondence between these two sets of affiliations, since the lineage is embodied in the segment and the clan in the tribe. Therefore, the distance in clan structure between two lineages of a dominant clan tends to correspond to the structural distance between the tribal segments with which they are associated. Hence the tribal system draws out and segments the dominant clans and gives them their characteristic lineage form. Evidence in support of this contention could be cited from any Nuer tribe; we propose to examine only a few typical examples.

We have observed that in the Lou tribe the Gaatbal and Rumjok secondary sections form the primary section of Gun in opposition to the Mor primary section, and how the dominant lineages of the Gaatbal and the Rumjok sections are descended from one wife of Denac and the dominant lineage of the Mor section is descended from a different wife, so that Gaatbal and Rumjok are to one another in a relation analogous to that of full brothers and the Gun stand to the Mor in a relation analogous to that of half-brothers. We have noted, likewise, how the dominant lineages of the Gaajak are descended from two closely related wives of Kir while the dominant lineages of the Gaajok and Gaagwang, which have a very close alliance, are descended from a third wife.

The GAATGANKIIR lineages in their relation to the segmentary structure of the Jikany tribes provide an excellent test of the hypothesis that lineage structure is twisted into the form of the political structure, for the same lineages are found at extremities of Nuerland where political conditions are not identical. Had I had more time in the Jikany countries, or had I formulated the problem more clearly in the little time I had to spend there, I might have been in a position to state my conclusions more dogmatically. We will briefly analyse the lineage system of the GAATGANKIIR in its relation to two of the Gaajak primary sections.

Thiang was the eldest son of Kir. He had two wives, Nyagaani 613
and Baal. From these two wives spring the three main lineages of
cieng Thiang, the Thiang primary tribal section, TAR, LONY (or 173
GEK), and KAWC. What is said to have happened is shown in the diagram on p. 242. Tar, being the only son of his mother, has founded an independent lineage and tribal section, that which lives in the

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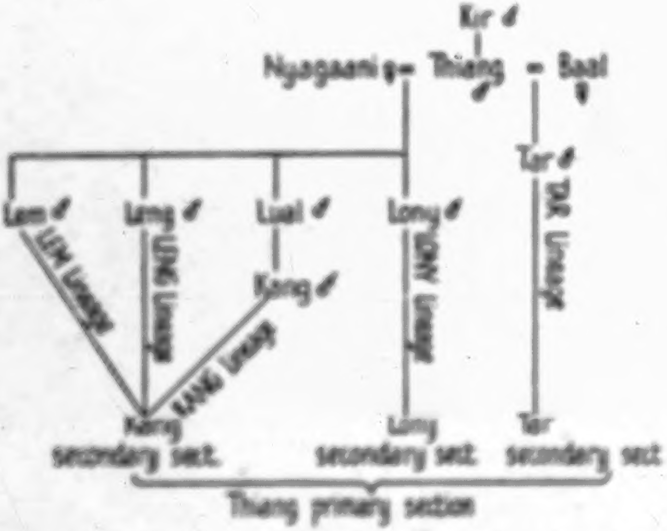
extreme south of Eastern Gaajak country. The other four lineages are all sprung from Nyagaani and are collectively known as *cieng* Nyagaani. At first her four sons stuck together, but later Lony's family increased and became more powerful than those of his brothers and tried to lord it over them, especially over Lem, the eldest. Kang, son of Lual, took the lead against Lony, and compelled him to migrate. Owing to the prominent part played by Kang, the lineages descended from Lem, Leng, and Lual are collectively known as *cieng* KANG in contrast to *cieng* LONY. These two lineages live to the extreme north of Eastern Gaajak country.[1] When the brothers are spoken about, as quarrelling, migrating, and so forth, it must be understood that the lineages and the local communities of which they form part are being personified and dramatised.


Kir ♂
Nyagaani ♀
Thiang ♂
Baal ♀
Tar ♂
Lem ♂
Leng ♂
Lual ♂
Lony ♂
Kang ♂
LEM Lineage
LENG Lineage
KANG Lineage
LONY Lineage
TAR Lineage
Kang secondary sect.
Lony secondary sect.
Tar secondary sect.
Thiang primary section

We see in this diagram how the splitting and merging of lineages, determined by the logic of lineage structure, follows the lines of tribal fission and fusion. Thus the descendants of Lem, Leng, and Lual, who live together, are merged in opposition to the LONY, and the LONY, who live adjacent to them, are merged with them in opposition to the TAR. The diagram does not show us the lines of descent which have become completely merged in those recorded, because such lines, having no localities specifically associated with them and therefore no community value, are not differentiated. That the diagram[2] does not truly record historic lineage growth, but is a distortion of it, is further suggested by the fact that there are, on an average, five generations from the present day to Lem and Leng, six to Lual, and seven to Lony, who was the youngest of the four brothers.

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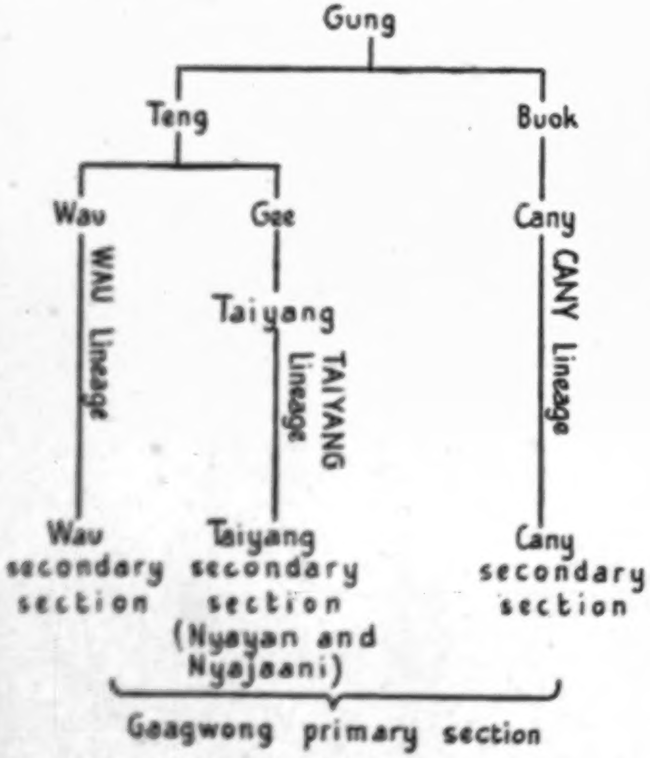
[1] The distribution of the three divisions of the Thiang primary section of the Gaajok tribe contrasts with the unbroken territory of the segments of primary sections elsewhere in Nuerland. I have not visited the area, and cannot explain this unusual distribution by historical events nor state its structural consequences.

The GAAGWONG lineage, which is the nucleus of the Gaagwong section, is called after Gung, son of Kun, son of Kir. The GAAGWONG maximal lineage splits into several major lineages. To make illustration easier only those important among the Eastern Jikany are figured in the diagram: CANY, WAU, and TAIYANG (NYAYAN and NYAJAANI), the descendants of Buok, Wau, and Gee.


Gung
Teng
Buok
Wau
Gee
Cany
WAU Lineage
Taiyang
TAIYANG Lineage
CANY Lineage
Wau secondary section
Taiyang secondary section (Nyayan and Nyajaani)
Cany secondary section
Gaagwong primary section

The CANY major lineage split up, as shown in the diagram on p. 244, into a number of smaller lineages of three to four generations in depth. In this diagram the traditional representation of cleavage between sons of the same father but of different mothers is shown

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[2] A [See p. 242 -- Analyst]

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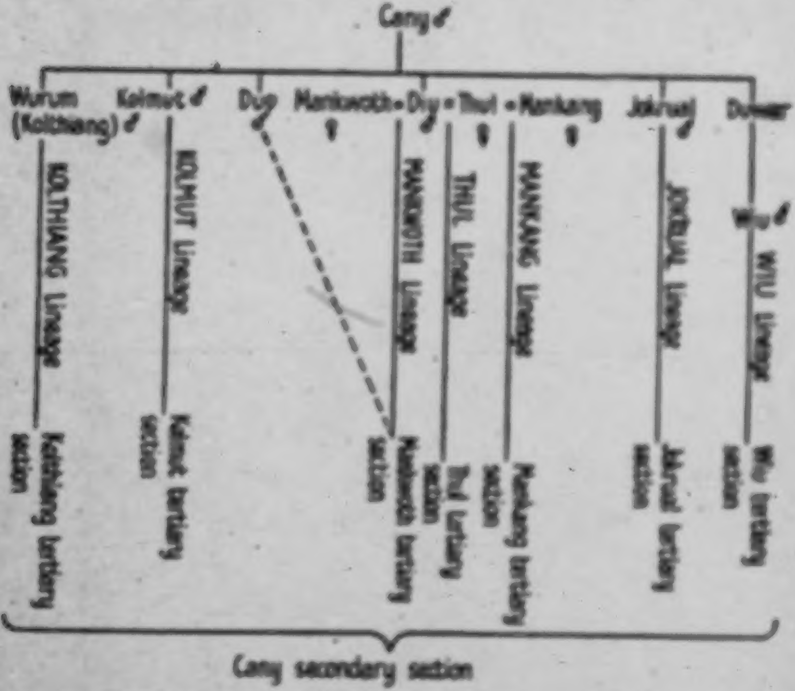
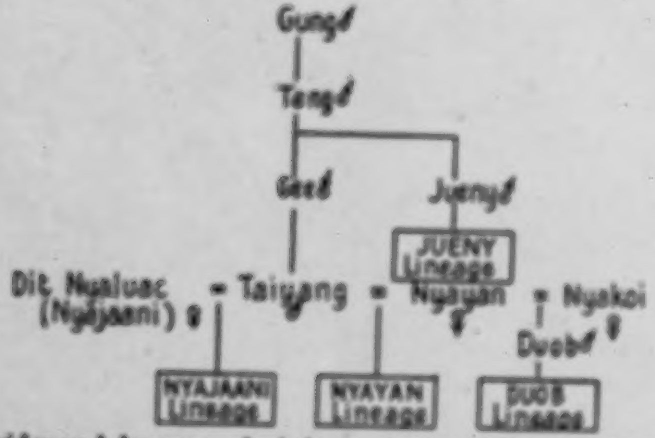
in the lines which spring from Diu through his three wives: Mankwoth, Thul, and Mankang. The descendants of Dup are normally referred to as *cieng* MANKWOTH because they live with them. Common residence has reacted on the lineage structure, so that the DUP lineage has become very largely merged in the MANKWOTH lineage. For this diagram I am indebted to the Government files of Nasser District. I have no record of the divisions of the WAU lineage.


Cany ♂
Wurum (Kolthiang) ♂
Kolmut ♂
Dup ♂
Mankwoth ♀
Diu ♂
Thul ♀
Mankang ♀
Jokrual ♂
Duwar ♂
Wau ♂
KOLTHIANG lineage
KOLMUT lineage
MANKWOTH lineage
THUL lineage
MANKANG lineage
JOKRUAL lineage
WAU lineage
Kolthiang tertiary section
Kolmut tertiary section
Mankwoth tertiary section
Thul tertiary section
Mankang tertiary section
Jokrual tertiary section
Wau tertiary section
Cany secondary section

In Western Nuerland WAU and CANY are politically unimportant lineages and are merged with *cieng* Taiyang, which is contrasted with *cieng* Jueny, called after Jueny, son of Teng, son of Gung, who founded a lineage politically unimportant among the Eastern Jikany. The TAIYANG lineage has two branches called after his wives Nyayan and Nyajaani. In Western Nuerland there is a third lineage springing from a third wife, Nyakoi.

It is interesting to observe that Jueny, whose line is politically unimportant among the Eastern Jikany, is there given as a son of Gee and merged in the TAIYANG line, while Duob is given as a son of Nyajaani and merged in her lineage. Here again we see how lineage structure is influenced by political relations.



A wider and deeper analysis is required to prove the thesis we have put forward and of which we have given a few out of many examples. It is, however, supported by evidence of a different kind. We found that it was always easier to obtain a more complete record, and a longer line, of descent from members of dominant lineages in the larger tribes than in the smaller tribes, showing that greater attention is paid to the lineage system in the larger tribes and that the clan structure is broadened and deepened to serve its structural function. Also, we found it easy to obtain from any adult member of an aristocratic lineage an account of the other maximal and major lineages of his clan and a long list of ancestors, some nine or ten at least, giving a consistent length from the founder of the clan; whereas we found that we could not elicit the same information from members of clans which have no tribal associations. They were often able to trace their descent back for only some four to six generations, the time depth they gave was seldom consistent, and they were usually unable to give a coherent account of the other lineages of their clan. We attribute this fact to the absence of systemization through association with tribal structures. A lineage does not stand in territorial opposition to other lineages of its clan, but has with them only a vague ceremonial relationship, and this relationship may never be expressed in corporate action. Consequently there is generally a complete absence of any elaborate system of lineages like those of the dominant clans. There are many JIMEM clansmen and doubtless one could by

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[412]

putting together their genealogies construct some sort of tree of descent from Mem, in which the agnatic relationship between various lineages could be indicated; but it would be very unlike the spontaneous statements that at once delineate the lineage system of large clans like the JINACA, associated with tribal territories.

It is also very noticeable that Nuer knowledge of the lineage system of a dominant clan tends to be restricted to those parts of the system that correspond to segments of their tribe. Thus the JINACA lineages which are associated with segments of the Lou tribe are well known to Lou tribesmen, but they have no, or very little, knowledge of the JINACA lineages of the Rengyan tribe. Likewise I experienced much difficulty in obtaining from Gaajok and Gaajak tribesmen a clear account of the lineages of the GAATGANKIIR clan which form the dominant nucleus of the Gaagwang tribe, though they were well informed about the lineages of the same clan which are associated with segments of their own tribes.

It follows from our account that, as we have suggested before, the lineage system of a clan can only to a very limited extent be considered a true record of descent. Not only does its time depth appear to be limited and fixed, but also the distance between collateral lineages appears to be determined by the political distance between the sections with which these lineages are associated, and it may be supposed that a lineage only persists as a distinct line of descent when it is significant politically. Ancestors above the founder of a minimal lineage are relevant only as points of departure for denoting lines of descent when these lines are rendered significant by the political role of the lineage system. We have suggested that the depth of lineages is a function of the range of counting agnation on an existential plane, and we now further suggest that the range of counting agnation is largely determined by its organizing role in political structure.

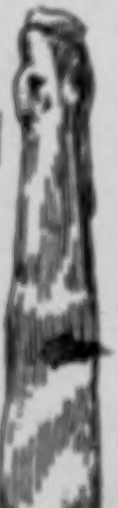


FIG. 13. Leather flail.

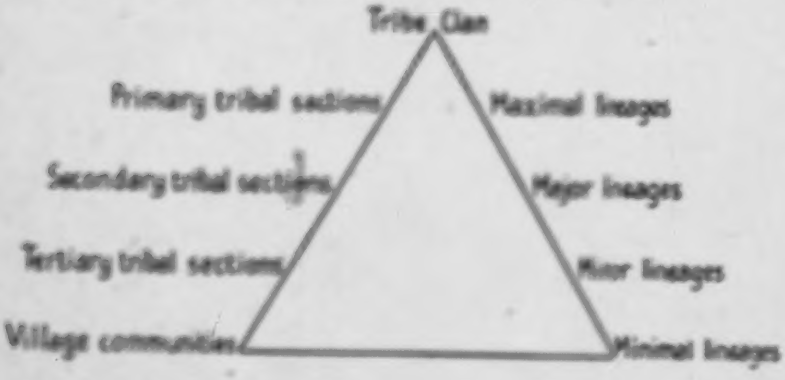
Nuer consider that lineage cleavage arises from a fundamental 613
cleavage in the family between *gaatgwan*, children of the father, 829
and *gaatman*, children of the mother. Where there are two wives and each has sons, the lineage bifurcates from this point. A lineage bifurcation is a polygamous family writ large. *Thok dwiel*, lineage, means this; it is 'the entrance to the hut', the mother's hut. The tiny twigs we see in the *gol*, household, grow into the great branches of the lineages. It is for this reason that lineages are so often named after women, the mothers from whose wombs sprang the different lines of descent. As we under- 613
stand the process, what happens is that certain lineage groups 182
gain political importance and exclusiveness, becoming nuclei of tribal sections, and that only by so doing is their structural position stabilized and are the points of their bifurcation rendered fixed and permanent points of convergence in lineage structure. This explains how it is that in only a few out of a vast number of polygamous families is maternal descent structurally significant, and why the bifurcation occurs in the lineage where it occurs in the tribe.

This tendency towards co-ordination of territorial segmentation and lineage segmentation can be seen in the various stages of territorial expansion between the household and the tribe. When brothers of an influential family live in different parts of a village and gather around them a cluster of relations and dependants, these hamlet-groups are named after them and they become the point at which the lineage is likely to bifurcate. Thus, if the brothers are called Bul and Nyang, people speak of the *gol* of Bul and the *gol* of Nyang, and if later the grandchildren of one of them move to a different village site the lineage will split into two branches. Such minimal lineages as those pictured in the diagrams on pages 196–7* occupy adjacent villages, or widely separated divisions of the same large straggling village, and make separate camps along the same stretch of river or adjacent camps around a small lake. The points of divergence of lineages from clan trees are thus related to the size and distribution of inhabited sites in a tribal area.

The association of the tribal system with a clan may thus 619
be supposed to influence the form of the lineage structure. We 613
may further emphasize the morphological consistency between

*[see cat. 116 — [illegible]]

619 the two structures. There are always more villages than tertiary
613 segments in a tribe and more tertiary segments than secondary segments, and so on, so that, since each territorial unit is associated with a lineage, the narrowing of such units from the multitude of villages to the single unit of the tribe must be reflected in the conceptual structure of the lineage system, there being a multitude of minimal lineages, fewer minor lineages, and so forth, till the single unit of the clan is reached. If this suggestion is accepted it is evident that the lineages are in number and structural position strictly limited and controlled by the system of territorial segmentation. The two systems may thus be represented diagrammatically by the same figure, though the correspondence is not exact.


Tribe Clan
Primary tribal sections
Maximal lineages
Secondary tribal sections
Major lineages
Tertiary tribal sections
Minor lineages
Village communities
Minimal lineages

CHAPTER VI

THE AGE-SET SYSTEM

I

ALL male Nuer are initiated from boyhood to manhood by a 881
very severe operation (*gar*). Their brows are cut to the bone with 304
a small knife, in six long cuts from ear to ear. The scars remain for life, and it is said that marks can be detected on the skulls of dead men. They are particularly clear in Plates XXVI(*b*), XXVII, and XXVIII. The ceremonial of initiation is more complex, and the age-set system has greater social importance among the Nuer than among other Sudan Nilotes.

We have described, and others have described, elsewhere the 000
ritual of initiation. Though we have since collected further information on the details of the rites, we consider that to transcribe it here would be out of accord with the plan of this book. The barest facts are related. Boys are now usually initiated 881
between the ages of 14 and 16; in the old days at a somewhat
later age, perhaps from 16 to 18. Whether a boy is initiated in 561
one year or in another year may depend on the milk and millet supply. A boy must obtain his father's consent to the operation, but it cannot well be refused, for the boy would then run away to the home of a kinsman and the father would be humiliated. He afterwards goes to a member of his father's age-set who performs a rite to give him the blessing of the set. A member of the clan likewise gives him its blessing, and his father and maternal uncle bless him. The boys make their own arrangements with the operator and each presents him with a fishing spear. The operator is any man who has learnt the art.

Several boys are initiated at the same time, for it is thought that were a boy to be initiated by himself he would be lonely and might die. Also, it is easier to cater for the boys and to give them the care and attention they require during convalescence if they are initiated in batches. Usually some four to a dozen boys pass through the rites together. Initiation can take place at any season, but it almost invariably takes place at the end of the rains, when there is plenty of food and the north wind blows and cicatrises the wounds. Each village acts independently

881 in arranging for its boys to be initiated. After the operation 561 the boys live in partial seclusion and are subject to various taboos. This is a time of mild licence and they pass out of it by a special rite. On the day of the cutting, and on the day of the passing out of seclusion, sacrifices are made and there is festivity, which includes licentious horseplay and the singing of lewd songs. Only age-mates of the father of the initiate in whose homestead the feasting takes place attend it: others keep at a distance lest they see the nakedness of their kinswomen and mothers-in-law.

II

All boys initiated during a number of successive years belong to a single age-set (*ric*). There has, till recently, been a four-year interval between the end of one such set and the commencement of the next. These four years are known as the time 'when the knife is hung up', and at the end of that period it is said 'the knife is brought out' and boys may then be initiated again. [591] A certain *wut ghok*, 'Man of the Cattle', is, in each tribe, responsible for opening and closing the initiation periods and thereby dividing the sets. He performs the appropriate rite in his district, and when the news goes round other districts begin or cease initiation. He derives prestige from his functions, but they are ritual and give him no political authority. Sometimes, [592] in Western Nuerland, they are performed by a prophet, but it is possible that in these cases the prophet is also a Man of the Cattle. The age-sets are organized independently in each tribe, 561 at any rate in the larger tribes, but it often happens that when 619 a new set has been started in one tribe an adjacent tribe will follow its lead, so that the names and periods of sets in neighbouring tribes are frequently the same. Also, though in different parts of Nuerland the names of the sets are different and the open and closed periods do not coincide, it is easy for a man who moves from one part to another to perceive in which set he would have been initiated had he been brought up in that part of the country.

881 To-day there are no closed periods and boys are initiated every 561 year. The Man of the Cattle announces every few years that he is about to cut the sets and performs a ceremony by which all

PLATE XXVII

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Initiation of boys (near Nasser, Eastern Gaajok)

[Face p. 250]

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youths initiated up to that year fall into one set and all youths initiated after that year fall into a junior set. The number of years during which a set runs before being cut is variable, and this has probably always been the case. We conclude on the evidence that ten years may be regarded as an average period between the commencement of one set and the commencement of the next. It was found that generally two sets, but occasionally one, intervened between the set of a man and that of his eldest son. In the case of younger sons two or three sets usually intervene. It may be accepted that on an average the generations of grandfather—father—son cover six sets.

At the time of my inquiry into the age-set system there were members of six sets alive, but there were only a few survivors of the senior set and the members of the next senior were very infirm. Sets with no living members are not recorded in the lists below. Their names are irrelevant to an understanding of the system and their order is so ill-remembered that the statements of two informants on the matter are seldom in entire agreement. It should be noted, however, that as far back as Nuer recitation carries us the names are not uniform for the whole of Nuerland and that they are not repeated. There is no cycle of names such as we find in many parts of East Africa. The Lou and the Eastern Jikany tend to have common names; also the tribes of western Nuerland; while the tribes of the Zeraf have some names in common with the Sobat river tribes and some with the tribes to the west of the Nile.

Lou tribe	Eastern Jikany	Lak tribe	Western Jikany and Leek tribes
Thut	*Thut*	*Thut*	*Lilwyang*
Boiloc	*Boiloc*	*Boiloc*	*Ruob*
Maker	*Maker*	*Ruob*	*Wangdel*
Dangunga	*Dangunga*	*Wangdel*	*Tangkwer*
Luac	*Carboc*	*Woani*	*Rol*
Lithgac	*Lithgac*	*Kec*	*Juong*
Rialmuc	*Rialmac*	*Pilual*	*Bildeang*

Each age-set has two or three subdivisions. Each year in the initiation period may receive a separate name and constitute a division though probably two years often have the same name and the divisions are usually two-year periods. But though a set is thus stratified internally and the divisions are called by different

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561 names, all members of the set are known by the name of the first division, and this common name persists while the others eventually fall into disuse. Thus to-day one seldom hears of *Maker indit* and *Ngwak*, but only of *Maker*, under which title both divisions are included. Likewise one hears small mention of *Gaeng indit*, *Carboc*, and *Nyamnyam*, and reference is normally to *Dangunga* (*Gaeng*), which term covers all three divisions. The senior division is called *indit*, the greater, and when the segmentary names are dropped the *indit* is dropped also, since its purpose is to distinguish the primary division from the later ones. Hence we have *Thut indit*, *Maker indit*, and *Boiloc indit*, the elder *Thut*, the elder *Maker*, and the elder *Boiloc*, but the *indit* ending in these names is eventually dropped and the complete sets become known as *Thut*, *Maker*, and *Boiloc*.

561 In recent years the matter has become somewhat complicated by the absence of well-defined closed and open initiation periods. Thus in my earlier visits to Lou and Eastern Gaajok I heard people speak of *Lieth indit*, *Lieth incar* (*Lieth intot*), *Ceiyot* (*Pilual*), and *Rialmar* (*Rialdang*) as four divisions of the *Lithpar* age-set, but this was because there had been no declaration by the Man of the Cattle separating them into different age-sets. On a later expedition I found that the *Lieth indit*, the *Lieth incar*, and *Ceiyot* had been declared to be a single age-set, and the *Rialmar* to start a new age-set, a second division of which, the *Kuekeryuaneni*, has since been initiated. Similarly among the Western Jikany and Leek the *Rialdang* age-set has recently been declared separate from the *Juong*. At one time in Eastern Gaajok the *Lithpar* were cut off from the *Rialmar*, while in the adjacent country of the Eastern Gaajak they had not yet been separated and remained for the time being a single set. It may thus happen that, in modern times, a sub-division may for a time be regarded as the junior segment of one set and later become the senior segment of the next set. Below are given the sub-divisions of the age-sets in the Lou and Western Jikany tribes:

Lou		Western Jikany	
Thut	*Thut indit* *Muothjaang* *Lilieu*	*Lilnyang*	*Lilnyang* *Lilieu* *Lilmuth*
Boiloc	*Boiloc indit* *Gehyangkebut* *Laibeun*	*Rush*	*Rush* *Nyanulith*
Maker	*Maker indit* *Ngwak*	*Wangdel*	*Wangdel* *Walkuar*

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Lou		Western Jikany	
Gaweng	*Gaweng indit* *Carboc* *Nyamnyam*	*Tangkwer*	*Tangkwer* *Karam*
Luac	*Luac indit* *Karam* *Cemilwari*	*Rol*	*Rol* *Pilual*
Lithgac	*Lieth indit (imbor)* *Lieth intot (incar)* *Caiyat (Pilual)*	*Juong*	*Juong* *Majaani*
Rialmac	*Rialmac (Rialdang) indit* *Kuekoryoam*	*Bildeang*	*Bildeang*

III

In seeking to understand how membership of an age-set determines a man's behaviour we have first to realize that there is no purposive education or moral training in the procedure of initiation. Also, many of the characteristic features of the age-set system in Kenya, where it is most highly developed, are absent in the Nuer variation. There are not three distinct age-grades of boys, warriors, and elders through which the sets pass, for a boy who is initiated into manhood remains in this grade for the rest of his life. Warriors are not prohibited from marrying and they neither enjoy privileges nor suffer restrictions different from those of other male adults. The sets have no administrative, juridical, or other specific political functions and the country is not handed over to their care. The sets have no definite military functions. Indeed, we are of the opinion that the Nuer age-set system ought not to be described as a military organization, though some writers give it this character. Youths who have recently been initiated are anxious for their first raid, and consider that they ought to earn for their set a reputation for valour, and it is likely that raids were generally conducted in the main by men of the most junior set. However, there is no grade of warriorhood through which the age-sets pass nor a grade of elderhood into which they enter. Were boy[illegible] old men to take part in warfare against other Nuer they would probably be killed, and it is understandable that raids are the occupation of the strongest and fleetest,

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561 701 though many middle-aged men accompany the expeditions and always have their share in inter-tribal fighting and local disputes.

The age-set system of a tribe is in no way its military organization. Men fight by villages and by tribal sections and not by sets. The war companies are local units and not age-set units, and within a company men of different sets fight side by side, though, especially in raids, most of the warriors would be members of the two most junior sets. Kinship and local ties determine a man's place in the ranks. Hence the age-sets are not regiments, though wars and raids are often spoken of as the actions of a certain set because they took place during the initiation period of this set and its members took the most prominent part in them, since skill in arms, love of adventure, and desire for booty are the privileges of youth.

561 885 It is in more general social relations, chiefly of a domestic and kinship order, and not in political relations that behaviour is specifically determined by the positions of persons in age-set structure. When a boy passes into the grade of manhood his [784] domestic duties and privileges are radically altered. His change of status is epitomized in the taboo on milking which comes into force on the day of his initiation and continues for the rest of his life, but it is expressed also in other domestic tasks, in habits of eating, and so forth. At initiation a youth receives from his father or uncle a spear and becomes a warrior. He is also given an ox, from which he takes an ox-name, and becomes a herdsman. From now on, till he is a husband and father, his chief interests are dancing and love-making. Then he becomes 'a true man': 'he has fought in war and not run away; he has duelled with his age-mates; he has cultivated his gardens; he has married a wife'.

There is a sudden and great change in status from boyhood to manhood, but the modes of behaviour which differentiate these two grades do not distinguish one set from another, for the privileges of manhood are enjoyed by members of all the sets equally. Nevertheless, the sets are stratified by seniority and there are well-defined relationships between them. Before summarizing these patterns of inter-set behaviour we touch on some general characteristics of the whole system.

The age-set system is a further exemplification of the segmentary principle which we have seen to be so evident a quality of social structure. 561 Tribes segment into sections and their sections further segment, so that any local group is a balanced relation between opposed segments. Clans segment into lineages and their lineages further segment, so that any lineage group is a balanced relation between opposed segments. Likewise the institution based on age is highly segmentary, being stratified into sets which are opposed groups, and these sets are further stratified into successive sections. We may therefore speak of structural distance in this new dimension. Just as the distance between political segments varies according to their positions in the political structure, and the distance between lineage segments varies according to their positions in the lineage structure, so the distance between age-set segments varies according to their positions in the age-set structure. The structural distance between any two sets is the social relation between those sets and the determinant of behaviour between their members.

The relativity of values which we noted in discussing the political and lineage systems may also be seen in the age-set system. We have noted that a set which is seen as an unsegmented whole by members of other sets is internally segmented, and that members of each of its segments see themselves as exclusive units in relation to the others, though these divisions close as the set becomes more senior and has a new position in relation to sets, since created, below it. Also, there is a tendency for members of two successive sets, adjacent segments of the structure, to fuse in relation to a third in feelings and in ceremonial actions. A *Rialmac* youth said: 'We and the *Lithgac* [576] are about the same age and we can be free in speaking to them, but we must show respect to an older man, even if he is not of our fathers' age-set.' Although there are six sets with living members there are very few survivors of the two senior sets, and from the point of view of a young man they are merged with the one that follows them. Only four sets count, and, seen by individuals, they merge into two generation groups of equals and brothers, and seniors and fathers or juniors and sons. To a *Lithgac* son of a *Maker* father all members of the *Maker* age-set

561 are his fathers, and the *Lithgac* and the *Luac* tend to see themselves as a single group in relation to the *Maker*, having a like attitude of respect towards them. But in relation to the *Dangunga* and to the *Lithgac*, the *Luac* identify themselves with the one or the other according to the direction of attention, and this is determined by the social situation. Any set tends to see the set senior to it as equals in relation to junior sets and the set junior to it as equals in relation to senior sets. It is possibly this contradiction which creates segmentation in any set. Thus, 561 264 at sacrificial feasts men eat according to their position in the age-set structure, but which sets sit and eat together depends on the set of the owner of the feast and on the number of sets present at it. If a *Dangunga* kills an ox and there are *Maker* present, but not *Boiloc*, then *Dangunga* eat with *Maker* and *Luac* with *Lithgac* and the *Rialmac* by themselves; but if there are *Boiloc* present then the *Maker* eat with them and the *Dangunga* with the *Luac*, and the *Lithgac* with the *Rialmac*. The *Dangunga* would not eat with the *Boiloc* because they are the set of their fathers or fathers-in-law; and for the same reason the *Luac* must eat with the *Lithgac* if the *Dangunga* go with the *Maker*.

561 The age-set system differs from the territorial and lineage systems in one important respect. Whereas the people of a territorial segment remain, or most of them remain, in the same structural relation to other territorial segments for their whole lives, and whereas the members of a lineage have a fixed relationship to other lineages, an age-set group changes its position in relation to the whole system, passing through points of relative juniority and seniority. This mobility of age-set groups is peculiar to the system and is a necessary characteristic of it, for it is an institution based on the succession of generations. Probably, for oecological reasons, the actual political configuration remains very much the same from generation to generation. People pass through the political system without their structural position in it changing to any extent during their passage. It is the same with the lineage system. Nevertheless the mobility of groups through the age-set structure and their changing position in it should not be allowed to obscure the constancy of its structural form. There have pro-

PLATE XXVIII

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a. Youth (Zeraf river)

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b. Youth (Lou) [Face p-256] c. Man (Zeraf river)

561 bably always been the same number of sets in existence at any time and these sets always have the same relative positions to each other in the system, regardless of actual groups of men composing them.

564 182 177 It is significant that among the Nuer, as among other East African peoples, the age-set system is the first institution to undergo rapid and great modification under European rule and that the other social systems do not appear to be affected by the changes in its constitution. This tends to confirm the opinion we have earlier expressed, that whilst the age-set system is combined with the territorial and lineage systems in the same social cadre and is consistent with them, the consistency is not an interdependence.

IV

561 554 Within the age-set system the position of every male Nuer is structurally defined in relation to every other male Nuer and his status to them is one of seniority, equality, or juniority. It is difficult to describe these statuses in terms of behaviour, because the attitudes they impose are often of a very general nature. The following points may, however, be noted. (1) There are certain ritual observances and avoidances, chiefly between members of the same set, but also between sets. The most [784] important of these are the segregation of the sets at sacrificial feasts, to which we have referred, and the stringent prohibition on members of a set burying an age-mate or partaking of the meat of beasts sacrificed at his mortuary ceremony; but there [836] [837] are a number of other ritual injunctions. (2) A man may not marry, or have sexual relations with, the daughter of an age-mate, for she is his 'daughter' and he is her 'father'. Also, while a man may always have sexual relations with the daughter of one of his father's age-mates he ought not to marry her unless either his father, or her father, is dead, and then only after the parties to the marriage have exchanged beasts in atonement to the age-set of the fathers. (3) Members of the 561 571 same age-set are on terms of entire equality. A man does not stand on ceremony with his age-mates, but jokes, plays, and eats with them at his ease. Age-mates associate in work, war, and in all the pursuits of leisure. They are expected to offer one

561 another hospitality and to share their possessions. Fighting is
571 considered an appropriate mode of behaviour between age-mates, but a man ought not to fight a man of a senior set. The comradeship between age-mates springs from a recognition of a mystical union between them, linking their fortunes, which derives from an almost physical bond, analogous to that of true kinship, for they have shed their blood together. (4) Members
561 of a set are expected to show respect to members of senior sets,
576 and their deference to them can be seen in discussions, in
626 etiquette, in division of food, and so forth. Whenever there is a question about the propriety of speech or action it is judged by reference to the relative positions of the persons concerned in the age-set structure, if kinship status is not also involved. Since every man has a known age-relationship to every other man in Nuerland with whom he is likely to come into contact, their social attitude to him, and his social attitude to them, is determined in advance by the distances between them in age-set structure, unless kinship takes precedence. Although it is possible for a man to avenge a breach of these patterns of behaviour by a curse, if it is a very serious breach, the ordinary sanctions of conduct are a man's conscience and desire for approval.

561 It will have been noted that the relations between the sets
608 are defined in the idiom of family relationships. The members of a man's father's age-set are his 'fathers' and the members of his father's brothers' 'age-sets' are, in a less precise sense, also his 'fathers'. The sons of a man's set are his 'sons', and they may fall into several sets. The wives of members of a man's father's set are his 'mothers', and the wives of members of his sons' sets are his 'daughters'. All members of a man's own set are likewise 'brothers', though here the analogy is seldom expressed because the comradeship between age-mates is strongly affirmed in the idiom of the system, for they are all *ric*, age-mates, to one another. As, in any case, a man commonly addresses all persons much senior to himself as 'father' and 'mother', all persons much junior to himself as 'son' and 'daughter', and all persons of about the same age as himself as 'brother' and 'sister', the terminology of address between different sets is not a differentiating one and it cannot be said how

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far it is determined by specific age-set relationships. When speaking about sets senior to his own, but not that of his father or the set immediately senior to his own, a Nuer sometimes speaks about them collectively as though all their members were his fathers-in-law and their wives his mothers-in-law, for he is courting their daughters and is likely to marry one of them and so is circumspect in his dealings with their parents. Thus a *Lithgac* son of a *Maker* father regards members of the *Dangunga* set and their wives as potential fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law. 561 602

The age-set system thus influences persons through a kinship idiom and on the pattern of kinship. The sets never act corporately, but they function locally between individuals and, in ceremonial situations, between small aggregates of persons who live near to one another, for a man only has frequent contacts with those members of his set and of other sets who live in his district. No doubt relative positions in age-set structure to some extent determine behaviour between neighbours, and it can sometimes be observed that they determine it, but it is difficult to say to what extent, for men who live near one another are not only members of the same age-set or of different age-sets but are also kinsmen or affines. The age-set patterns of behaviour are, except in specific rites, of so general a nature that they cannot be isolated in a community where everyone is related in a number of different ways to everybody else. We have noted how persons who live together are always able to express their relations to one another in the language of kinship and how, when they are not actual kinsmen, they are recognized as equivalent to such by adoption or through some traditional, or mythological, connexion. The age-set stratification of all men, and by analogy all women, into groups whose inter-relations are on the pattern of family relationships is one of the ways by which community relations are expressed in kinship patterns and is comparable to the classificatory system of kinship nomenclature in its assimilation of social relations to a few elementary types. Age-relations are part of the general social ties of a kinship type which unite all persons living in a community. The members of a local group have group relations only with other groups of the same kind and it is these relations 561 608 182-

561 which we call political. They also have manifold contacts with one another—economic, ceremonial, food, play, and so forth—
608 and political relations may be viewed as a specific organisation
-182 of the texture of social ties, which control these contacts, in certain situations. It is this action of the age-set system, in establishing ties between members of local communities and in giving them a kinship value, that we chiefly stress in a political context rather than its indication of leadership, for outside small kinship and domestic groups the authority derived from seniority is negligible, and the sets lack leadership and administrative and judicial functions.

561 The age-set system has been briefly treated because of this action and also because, in the larger tribes at any rate, it is a
619 tribal institution. It segments the male population of a tribe into stratified groups which stand in a definite relationship to one another and it cuts across territorial divisions, giving identity of status where there is political disparity and differentiating status where there is political identity. However, the political system and the age-set system do not seem to be interdependent. Both are consistent in themselves and to some extent overlap and influence one another, but it is easy to conceive of the political system existing without an age-set organisation. There is evidence in East Africa that political development produces atrophy of the age-set organisation. In conclusion we would again emphasise that adjacent tribes co-ordinate their sets and that the sets of any tribe are easily translated into the sets of another tribe. Initiation rites, more than anything save language, distinguish Nuer culture and give Nuer that sense of superiority which is so conspicuous a trait of their character. Only in the sense that age-sets are organised tribally and are common to all tribes can there be said to be a correspondence between the age-set system and the political system. There is no positive structural correspondence of the kind we have noted between the lineage system of dominant clans and tribal segmentation. It may be said, therefore, that whereas the political system and the lineage system of dominant clans are interdependent, the political system and the age-set systems are only a combination, in Nuer society. We may add that the common assumption that an age-set system merely by

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stratification integrates the members of a tribe has little to commend it.

V

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In the way we have written this book we have in some measure broken away from the tradition of lengthy monographs on primitive peoples. These weighty volumes generally record observations in too haphazard a fashion to be either pleasant or profitable reading. This deficiency is due to absence of a body of scientific theory in Social Anthropology, for facts can only be selected and arranged in the light of theory. It is aggravated by the error of confusing documentation with illustration. We have also tried to describe Nuer social organization on a more abstract plane of analysis than is usual, for usually abstract terms are mistaken for abstractions. Whether we have succeeded in doing so is for the reader to judge, but in case it be said that we have only described the facts in relation to a theory of them and as exemplifications of it and have subordinated description to analysis, we reply that this was our intention.

It is difficult to know how far one is justified in pressing an abstraction. Once one has a theoretical point of view it is fairly simple to decide what facts are significant, since they are significant or otherwise to the theory, but it may be doubted whether it is wise, in discussing the political institutions of a primitive people, to give only the barest reference to their domestic and kinship life. Can this be done successfully? That is precisely the question we have asked ourselves, and we have concluded that an answer can only be given to it by making the attempt.

1. We first gave an account of Nuer absorption in their cattle and showed how this value in their system of oecological relations necessitates a certain mode of distribution and transhumance. We then described the concepts of time and space that arise very largely from ways of livelihood and disposition of settlements. We then examined the territorial sections which, through the values attached to them, form a political system. We further noted that structural distance in the lineage systems

121 of the dominant clans is a function of structural distance in the tribal systems and that there is no comparable interdependence between age-set structure and political structure.

2. By social structure we mean relations between groups which have a high degree of consistency and constancy. The groups remain the same irrespective of their specific content of individuals at any particular moment, so that generation after generation of people pass through them. Men are born into them, or enter into them later in life, and move out of them at death; the structure endures. In this definition of structure the family is not considered a structural group, because families have no consistent and constant interrelations as groups and they disappear at the death of their members. New families come into being, but the old for ever vanish. We do not suggest that the family is for this reason of less importance than structural groups; it is essential for the preservation of the structure, for it is the means by which new persons are born into its segments and the system is maintained. Nor do we suggest that the relations we consider structural are between groups that do not in any way vary. Territorial, lineage, and age-set systems change, but more slowly, and there is always the same kind of interrelationship between their segments. We do not, however, insist on this limiting definition of structure and our description and analysis do not depend on it.

3. Structural relations are relations between groups which form a system. By structure we therefore further mean an organized combination of groups. The territorial distribution of a Nuer tribe is not a haphazard aggregate of residential units, but every local group is segmented and the segments are fused in relation to other groups, so that each unit can only be defined in terms of the whole system. Similarly a lineage or age-set can only be defined in terms of the systems of which they form part. We have tried to show this in our account.

4. By structure we mean relations between groups of persons within a system of groups. We stress that it is a relation between groups, for relations between individuals may also be arranged on a regular plan, e.g., kinship relationships may be spoken of as a kinship system. By 'group' we mean persons who regard themselves as a distinct unit in relation to other

PLATE XXIX

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Man (Nasser Post)

[Face p. 262]

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units, are so regarded by members of these other units, and who all have reciprocal obligations in virtue of their membership of it. In this sense a tribal segment, a lineage, and an age-set are groups, but a man's kindred are not a group. A kinship relationship is a category and the kinship system a co-ordination of categories in relation to an individual. In our opinion strangers and Dinka ought to be described as persons of certain categories rather than as members of social groups and that the relations between them and aristocrats are not, strictly speaking, to be described as structural relations.

5. The social structure of a people is a system of separate but interrelated structures. This book deals mainly with the political structure. Faced with the initial difficulty of defining what is political we decided to regard the relations between territorial groups as such, taking the village as our smallest unit, for though a village is a network of kinship ties it is not a kinship group, but a group definable only by common residence and sentiment. We found that the complementary tendencies towards fission and fusion, which we have called the segmentary principle, is a very evident characteristic of Nuer political structure. The lines of political cleavage are determined chiefly by oecology and culture. Harsh environment together with dominant pastoral interests cause low density and wide gaps in the distribution of local communities. Cultural differences between the Nuer and their neighbours also cause varying degrees of political distance. Oecological and cultural relations often combine to produce fission. In Nuerland itself culture is homogeneous, and it is oecological relations that chiefly determine the size and distribution of segments.

6. These tendencies in, or principles of, political structure control actual behaviour between persons through values. These values appear contradictory. They are only seen to be consistent when we view structure as sets of relations defined by reference to specific social situations. By political values we mean the common feeling and acknowledgement of members of local communities that they are an exclusive group distinct from, and opposed to, other communities of the same order, and that they ought to act together in certain circumstances and to observe certain conventions among themselves. It does not follow that

behaviour always accords with values and it may often be found to be in conflict with them, but it always tends to conform to them.

7. Not only can we speak of the relations between territorial groups as a political system, the relations between lineages as a lineage system, the relations between age-sets as an age-set system, and so forth, but also in a society there is always some relationship between these systems in the whole social structure, though it is not easy to determine what this relationship is. We have shown that there is interdependence of a kind between the Nuer lineage system and their political system. This does not mean a functional relationship between clan groups and territorial groups, although they have a certain association, for clans, and even their lineages have no corporate life. Nor does it mean that when a man behaves in a certain way to a fellow clansman and in a different way to a fellow tribesman that there is a functional relationship between these two modes of behaviour. Nor, again, does it mean that there is a functional relationship between those members of a dominant clan who live in a tribe and the tribe of which they form part. But it means that there is structural consistency between the two systems—a consistency between abstractions. We are unable to show a similar interdependence between the age-set system and the political system.

8. Can we speak of political behaviour as a distinct type of social behaviour? We have assumed that certain activities, such as war and feuds, may be called political, but we do not consider that much is gained by so designating them. It is only on the more abstract plane of structural relations that a specific sphere of political relations can be demarcated. The behaviour of persons to one another is determined by a series of attachments, to family, joint family, lineage, clan, age-set, &c., and by kinship relationships, ritual ties, and so forth. These strands of relationships give to every man his sphere of social contacts. His field of actual contacts is limited; his field of potential contacts is unlimited. We distinguish a man's social sphere in this sense from structural space, the distance between social segments, which are groups of people who compose units in a system. We do not therefore say that a man is acting politically

or otherwise, but that between local groups there are relations /2/ of a structural order that can be called political.

9. We do not describe the different social ties which exist between persons living in the same district, but we may say that, in our view, the relations between this network of individual relationships, that together make up a community, and political structure, the relations that exist between territorial segments, present a problem of considerable importance, and we make some comments on it. (*a*) Social relationships are ordered by the political structure, so that a man's social sphere, and the joint social sphere of a number of persons living in the same village, tend always to be limited by the extension of their political groups. (*b*) Local communities, relations between which constitute the political structure, are only groups because of these many and varied relationships between the individuals who compose them. But it is the organization of these relationships into groups standing in a certain relation to one another within a system that interests us in our present discussion and we only study them in this organized form; just as one can, for certain purposes, study the relation between organs of the body without studying the interrelation of the cells that compose the organs. (*c*) In our view the territorial system of the Nuer is always the dominant variable in its relation to the other social systems. Among the Nuer, relationships are generally expressed in kinship terms, and these terms have great emotional content, but living together counts more than kinship and, as we have seen, community ties are always in one way or another turned into, or assimilated to, kinship ties, and the lineage system is twisted into the form of the territorial system within which it functions.

10. We have defined structure by what amounts to the presence of group segmentation and have discussed some Nuer systems from this point of view. We again emphasize that we do not insist on our definition and that we recognise that structure can be otherwise defined. But having so defined it, frequent allusion to a principle of contradiction in it was forced on us. To avoid misunderstanding, however, we would remark that the contradiction we have alluded to is on the abstract plane of structural relations and emerges from a systematization of

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[2.] values by sociological analysis. It is not to be supposed that we mean that behaviour is contradictory or that groups stand in contradiction to one another. It is the relations of groups within a system that constitutes and exemplifies the principle. There may sometimes be conflict of values in the consciousness of an individual, but it is structural tension to which we refer. Likewise when we refer to the relativity of the structure we do not mean that a group is anything than an actual mass of people who can be seen and counted and plotted in space and time. We mean that on the plane of structural relations its position in a system is relative to the functioning of the system in changing situations.

11. Besides making a contribution to the ethnology of the Nilotes we have attempted in this book a short excursion into sociological theory, but we can only make a theoretical analysis up to a certain point, beyond which we perceive vaguely how further analysis might be made. Our experience in research and in writing this essay has intimated the lines of more extensive treatment. Social anthropology deals at present in crude concepts, tribe, clan, age-set, &c., representing social masses and a supposed relation between these masses. The science will make little progress on this low level of abstraction, if it be considered abstraction at all, and it is necessary for further advance to use the concepts to denote relations, defined in terms of social situations, and relations between these relations. The task of exploring new country is particularly difficult in the discipline of politics where so little work has been done and so little is known. We feel like an explorer in the desert whose supplies have run short. He sees vast stretches of country before him and perceives how he would try to traverse them; but he must return and console himself with the hope that perhaps the little knowledge he has gained will enable another to make a more successful journey.

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[Information on "clans" has been filed in category 614; see also categories 613 and 619 for information on the relationship of "clans," lineages, and tribe.]

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[For information on "leopard-skin chiefs" see category 624.]

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A wedding dance

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KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE AMONG THE NUER

BY

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PREFACE

114 IN 1940 I published under the title *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People,* referred to henceforward as *The Nuer*, the first part of a general summary of the information collected during twelve months spent among the Nuer of the Nilotic Sudan in the years 1930, 1931, 1935, and 1936. The present volume forms the second part of this general account. I had planned to publish it in 1942 and it was already partly written before the war. During the years of war military service compelled me to relinquish literary work, and the completion of the book has since been further delayed by academic duties and also by a change of interests which led me to give my first attention to a history of the Sanusi of Cyrenaica.

101 The Nuer are a Nilotic people of between 200,000 and 300,000 souls living in savannah country near the Upper Nile and its tributaries. They are a cattle people, the ebb and flow of whose transhumant life follow the seasons. They are divided into a number of tribes, the largest political groups of their society, and these tribes are segmented into sections and subsections corresponding structurally to the segments, or lineages, of the clans [114] dominant in each tribal territory. In *The Nuer* I described the form of segmentation in political and descent groups and I attempted to show the principles which underlie it. I also gave a short account of the age-set system; but I omitted all but the briefest references to marriage, family, and kinship because I believe that political structure presents problems which are better inquired into apart from social relations of a different kind.

121 In this second volume I first show that the members of a Nuer village or camp are not only kith but also kin, and how the network of kinship ties within local communities is connected with the lineage system of the Nuer and through that system with their tribal, or political, constitution. This demonstration serves as a bridge between the theme of my earlier book and the subject of marriage to which the present volume is largely devoted. The network of kinship ties within any Nuer community can ultimately be reduced to a series of marriage unions. Among the Nuer, as in all human societies, marriage and the family are the most fundamental institutions.

The role of kinship values in Nuer society cannot be understood

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The role of Kinship values in Nuer society cannot be understood

PREFACE

unless the range of prohibited degrees in marriage is taken into account. For this reason, and also because it would seem the logical order of treating the various topics relating to marriage, I discuss marriage prohibitions and incest before describing in Chapter III the steps by which marriage is brought about—courtship, ceremonies, payment of bridewealth, birth of a firstborn, and the observance of formal rules of behaviour between affinal relatives—and the various forms of marriage and concubinage found among the Nuer.

C

I discuss in the two final chapters some features of the family, the group brought into existence by marriage, and kinship, the system of categories of relationship which derives from the family. I have not been able to treat these two topics as exhaustively as their importance demands. A second year among the Nuer would have been necessary to cover them satisfactorily.

I have given in *The Nuer* a full bibliography up to the year 1939. Since then various articles have been published by others* and by myself,† and a dictionary of the Nuer language has appeared.‡

OCC I make acknowledgement for the use I have made of my own articles to the Editors of *Sudan Notes and Records, Uganda Journal, Africa, African Studies, Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft, Social Structure, African Systems of Kinship and Marriage,* and *Man,* and to the Director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. Much detail omitted in this book is recorded in these articles.

113

* A. H. Alban, 'Gwek's Pipe and Pyramid', *S.N. & R.*, 1940; P. Coriat, 'Gwek, the Witch-Doctor and the Pyramid of Dengkur', ibid. 1939; P. P. Howell, 'A Note on Elephants and Elephant Hunting among the Nuer', ibid. 1945; 'On the Value of Iron among the Nuer', *Man*, 1947; (with B. A. Lewis) 'Nuer Ghouls: a Form of Witchcraft', *S.N. & R.*, 1947; 'The Age-Set System and the Institution of "*Nak*" among the Nuer', ibid. 1948; F. D. Kingdon, 'The Western Nuer Patrol 1927–8', ibid. 1945.

† 'The Nuer of the Southern Sudan', *African Political Systems*, 1940; 'Nuer Bridewealth', *Africa*, 1946; 'Bridewealth among the Nuer', *African Studies*, 1947; 'Nuer Marriage Ceremonies', *Africa*, 1947; 'A Note on Courtship among the Nuer', *S.N. & R.*, 1947; 'A Note on Affinity Relationships among the Nuer', *Man*, 1948; 'Nuer Modes of Address', *Uganda Journal*, 1948; 'The Nuer *Col Wic*', *Man*, 1949; 'Burial and Mortuary Rites of the Nuer', *African Affairs*, 1949; 'Nuer Rules of Exogamy and Incest', *Social Structure*, 1949; 'Two Nuer Ritual Concepts', *Man*, 1949; 'Nuer Totemism', *Annali Lateranensi*, 1949; 'Nuer Curses and Ghostly Vengeance', *Africa*, 1949; 'The Nuer Family', *S.N. & R.*, 1950.

‡ Father J. Kiggen, *Nuer-English Dictionary*, 1948 (based on the manuscripts of Father J. P. Crazzolara).

PREFACE

OOO

My study of the Nuer was made on behalf of the Government of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, to whom I am again indebted for financial assistance towards costs of publication. In *The Nuer* I have already thanked those friends, missionaries and administrative officers, who helped me in the Sudan. I express to the following gentlemen my appreciation of their kindness in reading the manuscript of this book: Dr. M. N. Srinivas, Mr. R. G. Lienhardt, and Mr. K. O. L. Burridge.

I dedicate it to my friend and teacher, Professor A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, whose vast knowledge and illuminating analyses of primitive kinship systems have placed all students of the subject in his debt.

E. E. E-P.

OXFORD
July 1950

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The last two illustrations are from drawings of specimens collected by the author and now in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge.

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CHAPTER I

KINSHIP AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

I

621 In *The Nuer* I stated that the village is the smallest corporate
114 group of a political kind among the Nuer and that in reading my
description of their political structure the reader would have to
take for granted the network of kinship and affinal ties within a
village. I must now ask him to remember that, though I describe
in this book relationships between persons within local communities
without again describing the wider political structure,
the local communities within which these relationships function
and which they serve to maintain are the basic units of that structure.
I must also make it plain that in *The Nuer* I was chiefly
interested in the relation of clan segmentation to tribal segmentation,
and therefore in discussing lineages gave chief attention to
the systematic form their structure presents when co-ordinated
613 with tribal, or political, structure. To avoid misunderstanding it
621 is desirable to emphasize that in Nuerland there are also small
lineages which have fewer branches and less depth than the dominant
clans to which I gave particular attention in my book. These
less systematized descent groups may be associated with local
communities smaller than tribes and their larger segments, but
they are only associated with them in terms of the tribal structure
as a whole through some relationship to its dominant clan; and
sometimes they are not associated with local communities at all.

621 The Nuer village (*cieng*) is a corporate group with a feeling of solidarity. Though its members have contacts with persons in neighbouring villages, and even in other sections of their tribe and in adjacent tribes, the greater part of their activities are carried out within their own village community and their strongest ties are generally with other members of it. Nuer have great affection for their homes and, in spite of their wandering habits, men born and bred in a village are likely to return to it even if they live elsewhere for some years. Villagers fight side by side in defence and attack and they support one another in feuds. When their youths attend dances in the district they enter them

621 in a war line (*dep*) singing their special war chant, and they remain together during the dancing lest some incident should lead to fighting, for it sometimes happens that when the dancing parties of different villages duel their play passes into fighting. Villagers also have close economic relations and common economic interests which make a village a corporation owning its cultivations, water-supplies, fishing-pools, and grazing grounds; the ownership being spoken about in terms of the lineage with which the village is socially identified. There is, especially in the smaller villages, much co-operation in labour and much sharing of food. At the beginning of the drought the villagers may scatter to camp round different pools in the bush and some families, and even large aggregates of relatives, may spend the dry season with kinsmen of different villages, but the scattering is temporary. As a rule, families which live in the same village in the rains share the same cattle camp (*wec*) at the height of the drought.

Nevertheless, in spite of their many contacts with one another and of their concerted action in their relations with other villages, there may be rivalries between members of different parts of a single village. This is more noticeable in the larger villages, where groups of kin occupy distinct sections of the village site and have a feeling of exclusiveness towards each other. '*Wa pekda*', 'I go to my end (of the village)', often indicates, besides direction, a sectional loyalty.

361 Nuer villages, called after the names of their sites, vary in size and form, both of which depend largely on local conditions. Some are small communities of not more than a few families living on riverside mounds, accumulations of debris which have been dwelling places for long periods. They may be regarded as colonies attached to larger communities. Larger villages, of some hundreds of souls, are generally strung out along the backs of ridges, but where there is a wide stretch of high ground a village may be distributed in all directions over several miles of country.

Indeed, it is a characteristic of all Nuer villages, to which Jules Poncet alludes,* that they are spread out as freely as the nature of the ground permits in little groups of habitations, each separated generally from its neighbours by some fifty to several hundred paces. A group of this kind often consists of a single homestead, a cattle byre with its attendant hut or huts, the dwelling of a family.

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* Jules Poncet, *Le Fleuve Blanc*, 1863–4, p. 40.

KINSHIP AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

36/ The Nuer speak of a man's homestead as his *gol*, the primary meaning of which word is the heap of smouldering cattle-dung in the centre of a byre and the hearth around it. In its narrowest social use the word means family, the occupants of the homestead, and it may also therefore have the further sense of household, since there may be other persons living there than members of the owner's family who count nevertheless, as we would say, as members of the family. Frequently the byres and huts of two or three families, the heads of which are commonly brothers or a man and his married sons, are grouped around a common kraal so that we may then speak of a composite homestead; or several homesteads, owned generally by close kin, are adjacent to one another and form distinct clusters which we may call hamlets. Nuer speak of a composite homestead as the *gol* of so-and-so, naming its senior member, although they also refer to each of its component homesteads as the *gol* of its particular owner. They may use the same word to describe what I have called a hamlet, though a cluster of this kind with the land around it is also designated by the word *dhor*, combined with the name either of its senior member, as *dhor* Nyang, the hamlet of Nyang, or of some natural feature, as *dhor ngop*, the hamlet of the wild fig-tree. In its widest connotation *gol* may have the sense of 'lineage', when a lineage is thought of as a residential group. The word *cieng*, which has the general sense of 'home', may be employed to describe a residential group of any size, from single homestead to large tribal division. It is usually coupled with the name of a lineage when it refers to local groups of any size.

When Nuer leave their villages in the dry season they collect, often after temporary dispersal, in large waterside camps. There is then greater solidarity, both spatial and moral, than in the rains. The community of a camp is crowded together in grass windscreens and little grass beehive huts, and the herds which in the rains are tethered in separate kraals are now tethered in the same [233] kraal or in adjacent kraals. In the rains, when water is abundant and pasturage near at hand, the cattle are either not herded at all or each family, or a group of adjacent families, herds its own; but in the dry season, when conditions are different, the cattle of a camp are watered and pastured together and the different families 221/ take it in turn to provide herdsmen. Activities performed of necessity or by preference in parties—hunting, fishing, and collecting—

22 are dry-season activities. Also, milking, cleaning kraals, making
up fires, cooking, pounding grain, and other chores which are performed
separately and at different times by each household in
the villages tend to be performed in unison in the camps. The
greater density of the community and the rigours of the season
36 impose a common regimen. Another feature of cattle camps which
has some social importance is their composition. Neighbouring
village communities which in the rains occupy different sites,
often divided by wide swamps, frequently make common camp or
they camp so near to each other that there are more intimate relations
between their members in the dry season. The radius of
effective kinship is greater in the dry season than in the wet.

Although there is this greater cohesion in camps, the families and joint families and larger clusters of kin whose social distinction is evident in the distribution of homesteads in the villages maintain their identity in the distribution of camp windscreens and huts. Each family has its own windscreen, corresponding to its byre in the village, and in the centre of it is the *gol*, its hearth of ashes. Attached to the windscreen are the beehive huts of the womenfolk, just as in the villages their wattle-and-daub huts are attached to the byre. The windscreens of those whose homesteads adjoin in the villages are generally adjacent to, almost touching, one another in the camps and form clearly demarcated rows in the circle of camp dwellings. When a large village is clearly segmented, the separation observable in the distribution of its homesteads can also be noted in the dispersal of smaller camps within the general camping area. These social alinements are most evident in the early part of the dry season, before the large concentrations of the main season have been formed, for then small groups of kin often make independent camps around isolated pools at some, sometimes a considerable, distance from each other.

II

602 All the members of such a village or camp as I have briefly
613 described[1] are kin. Before giving examples in illustration of this
614 statement I must say again what I have already said in *The Nuer*
about the difference between lineage relations and kin relations
because it is a very important difference. In speaking of lineages I
refer to unilateral groups of kin—among the Nuer groups of

[1] [cf. cat. 116, pp. 2 ff. - Analyst]

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agnates—and in speaking of kinship I refer to categories of kin. In speaking of lineage relations I therefore refer to relations between groups within a system of such groups, whereas in speaking of kin, or kinship, relations I refer to relations between persons standing to one another in certain categories of relationship within a system of such categories. It is often difficult for those who have not lived in a society with a lineage structure to appreciate the distinction I have drawn because the relationship between collateral lineages of the same clan is necessarily also one that can be expressed in terms of a kinship category, and it is possible in certain circumstances even to speak of the relation between lineages of different clans in similar terms, for they may wish on occasions to stress a genealogical nexus between themselves, indicating thereby that, for example, the one stand to the other as *gaatnar*, children of the maternal uncle, or as *gaatwac*, children of the paternal aunt. But in these cases it is a relationship between groups that is referred to and not a personal relationship between individuals except in so far as it is derived from the relationship between the groups to which they belong.

As I have explained in *The Nuer*, the lineages of Nuerland are dispersed groups, though in a certain sense they may be regarded as corporate groups in the form they take as political segments in fusion with other elements. They provide the conceptual framework of the political system within which they also function as its organizing principle through the expression of political fission and fusion in terms of their segmentary structure. The identification of lineage segments with tribal segments in a political context is brought about by the acknowledgement that certain clans and their lineages have rights in certain tribal areas and by the residence in those areas of a sufficient number of members of these dominant groups to act as nuclei of local and political groups. It probably never happens that all members of a lineage of any order—maximal, major, minor, or minimal—live in the area associated with it and to which it gives its name, though very many of them may do so.

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Because the usual reference to a lineage is in a political context it is generally spoken of as the *cieng* of such-and-such a people (the name of the lineage being given), for, like the word *gol*, *cieng* has always a residential, and not an exclusive descent, connotation. When reference is made to a lineage in a context in which it is

601 613 614 desired to particularize it as an exclusive descent group, a group of agnatic kin descended from a common ancestor, Nuer use the expressions *thok dwiel* or *thok mac*, literally the doorway to a hut or the hearth, to denote it; but these expressions are little used because abstraction of a lineage from its social and political matrix has only rarely to be made: on certain ritual occasions and in connexion with feuds and rules of exogamy.

601 602 The distinction between an agnatic lineage relation and an agnatic kinship relation is clearly made by Nuer themselves, from whom indeed I learnt it. They use the word *buth* to describe agnatic kinship between collateral lineages, that is to say, kinship between groups and between individuals only in virtue of their membership of these groups. On the other hand, they use the word *mar* to describe any and every relationship of a kinship kind between persons. All persons with whom a man acknowledges any kind of kinship, through however many other persons, are *mar*, kin, to him. People say of him and of any such person '*teke mar*', 'they have kinship'; and he speaks of any or all of his relations as '*jimarida*', 'my kinsmen'. The term *mar* includes relatives through the mother, the maternal kin, and through the father, the paternal kin. This is the meaning the word has when used by Nuer collectively and without restrictive qualification. Its sphere of reference is indicative of the balance we find in social life generally between the paternal kin and the maternal kin, a balance evident in the configurations of kin in local communities which I am about to describe. Nuer also sometimes use *mar* when speaking of affinal relations, especially when they are long established. In a broad sense they also are kin in the eyes of Nuer, just as in our own society we include our affines in the category of relatives.

Where there is a *buth* relationship between lineages there must also, in one way of speaking, be *mar* between the members of one and the members of the other, for the relationship between collateral lineages is agnatic and the members of the one must therefore be patrilineal kin to the members of the other. The question therefore arises: at what point in the spread of an agnatic line, conceived of as a number of living patrilineal kinsmen, does interpersonal *mar* relationship become the inter-group relationship Nuer call *buth* so that these kinsmen divide into segmentary descent groups or lineages? The question may be put in another way: how many generations back do Nuer trace patrilineal ascent

before they reach the first ancestor from whom bifurcate collateral 601
lines of descent of the kind they call a *thok dwiel*, a lineage? 602

A Nuer, when asked about this matter, gave an historical explanation: 'In the days when people scattered, brother and son went raiding and they settled where they raided. Then kinship ceased (*ce mar thuk*) and there remained only a lineage relationship (*ce dwoth ni buth*).' This could only have happened, however, as Nuer themselves say, after some generations had elapsed. Even [583]
today descendants of Nuer who settled to the east of the Nile, after raiding the Dinka in what are now the Jikany and Lou tribal areas, sometimes travel to the homes of their forebears to the west of the Nile to receive cattle which are their due on the marriages of the daughters of kinsmen from whose fathers and grandfathers their fathers and grandfathers separated. While the privileges of kinship are thus claimed, the persons concerned cannot be regarded as *jibuthni*, members of collateral lineages. Indeed, in [613]
my experience, Nuer do not generally speak of lineages till four or five generations back in patrilineal ascent, and I think also that there are good technical reasons for following Nuer usage in this matter and for not speaking of lineages before at least the third generation is reached.

Although any relative of a man is *mar* to him, the word most frequently refers to close relatives only, and on the paternal side generally implies those persons on the marriage of whose daughters a man can claim a portion of the bridewealth proper, which means an agnatic relationship deriving from any forebear as far back as, but not beyond, the bride's great grandfather. Nuer commonly explain such matters in terms of cattle-rights. Also it is for descendants of the great grandfather that specific kinship terms are used in their primary reference. It is this grouping, in relation to any person, of agnates of three generations in depth that I shall have in mind when I speak of a man's paternal kin.

Beyond this point we enter into the structural relations of the 602
lineage system where the Nuer begin to speak of collectivities of 613
agnates. There is always *buth* between collateral lineages of the same clan and there may also be *buth* between clans, as I have
explained in *The Nuer*. Also, a captured Dinka boy may be *lath* [597]
buthni, given *buth*, and thereby made a member of his captor's
lineage. Groups which have no *buth* have *rul* between them, [609]
that is, they are 'strangers'. I omit further discussion about the 000

000 inter-relations of collateral lineages because they do not here directly concern us.

III

621 602 Having made what preliminary explanations seemed to be necessary, I record some examples of the network of kinship ties in typical Nuer villages and camps.

As I have said earlier, members of a village are all *mar*, kin, to one another; any villager can trace kinship to every other person in his village, either by a direct kinship tie or through a third person who is in different ways related both to himself and the other person. Furthermore, he can establish kinship of some kind—real, by analogy, mythological, or assumed—with everybody he comes into contact with during his lifetime and throughout the length and breadth of Nuerland; and this is necessary if he has frequent dealings with them, for all social obligation of a personal kind is defined in terms of kinship. But within his local community the links are definite and well known. All members of a village or cattle camp can be placed on a single genealogical chart showing relationship by blood, adoption, and marriage.

[101] 361 The village of Konye is on a site on the left bank of the Pibor and a few miles to the south of Akobo Post. It is on the periphery of Nuerland, on their present-day frontier with the Anuak, and has only recently been used by Nuer, of the Lou tribe, as a permanent wet-season settlement, though they have probably long camped on the site in seasons of severe drought. Nevertheless, the social cluster found in occupation of it in May 1935 is typical of small communities in every part of Nuerland. In that year the village consisted of eleven homesteads perched on a high mound some eighty paces in diameter with four attached homesteads lying between four hundred and six hundred paces to the south of the mound. On a rough estimate the population of the village and
124 attached homesteads was eighty to a hundred souls. I spent only a few days in the village and restricted my inquiries there to an effort to discover its genealogical pattern by ascertaining the kinship ties between the men who owned the fifteen cattle byres, that is to say, between the fifteen heads of families of the settlement. This might seem a simple task, but in Nuerland, where people do not co-operate in an inquiry of this kind, it is by no means so, and

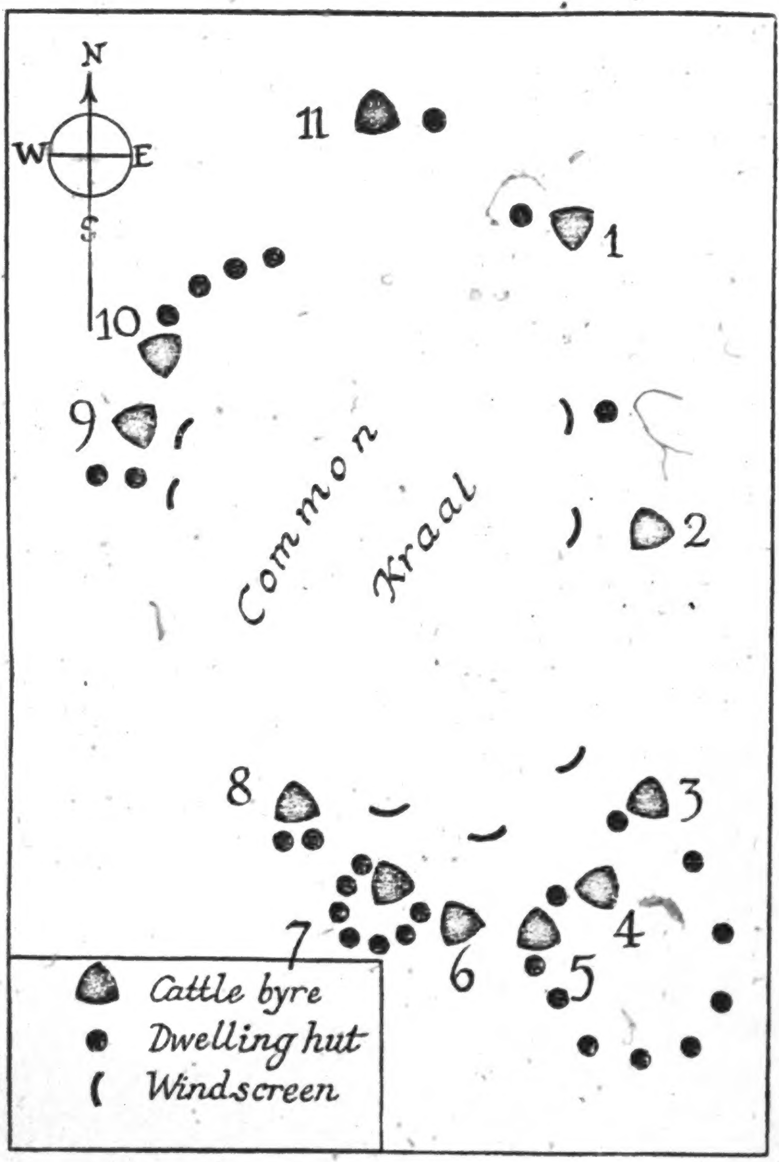
the genealogy had to be pieced together by asking why each owner of a byre had come to live at Konye, a question answered by mentioning his relationship to someone already living in the village. There may be other ties of kinship or affinity between members of the different families which have not been recorded. There may also be more domestic unions other than the union of simple legal marriage than those shown on the chart. Irregular unions are not easily unearthed in a rapid survey which is not directed to that end. The genealogical table, which includes the owners of the outlying homesteads, is not a complete record of all the persons living at Konye. 124

The chief man of the village is Rue-Wor (homestead 8),[1] and his son Deng-Rue (homestead 12)[1] is the chief man of the outlying hamlet. The community is grouped round Rue, who, although he belongs to the Gaawar clan and therefore counts as a stranger (*rul*) and not as an aristocrat (*dil*) in the Lou tribal territory where he resides, is the *tut*, the 'bull', as Nuer say, of this community. A man holding this social position is also sometimes referred to as *ruei wec*, an expression which appears to mean 'spittle of the camp (community)'. There are several Lou tribal aristocrats in the village, but they have only a lineage, and no special personal status in it. Kinsmen of the villagers from the interior of Lou country spend the dry season in the village. 621

I direct attention to some features of the genealogy which are typical of many small Nuer communities. The Konye community is not in itself in any sense a lineage group, though it is attached politically to one of the dominant Jinaca lineages of the Lou tribe. Its nucleus is the family of Rue-Wor, the 'bull' of the village, and linked to it, some in one way and some in another, are a group of kin related to Rue and to each other. Any relationship of a man with any other member of the community serves to attach him to it and to give him status in it, for any tie to a particular person gives him further ties with all its other members. The tie may be of different categories and of varying degrees of kinship. Within the complex of village kinship ties and the circuit of daily contacts all relationships are given equal weight, for what is significant is less the category or degree of kinship than the fact of living together in a small and highly corporate community. 621 602 601

It will be noted that a considerable proportion of the owners of byres in the villages are living there because of affinal relationships,

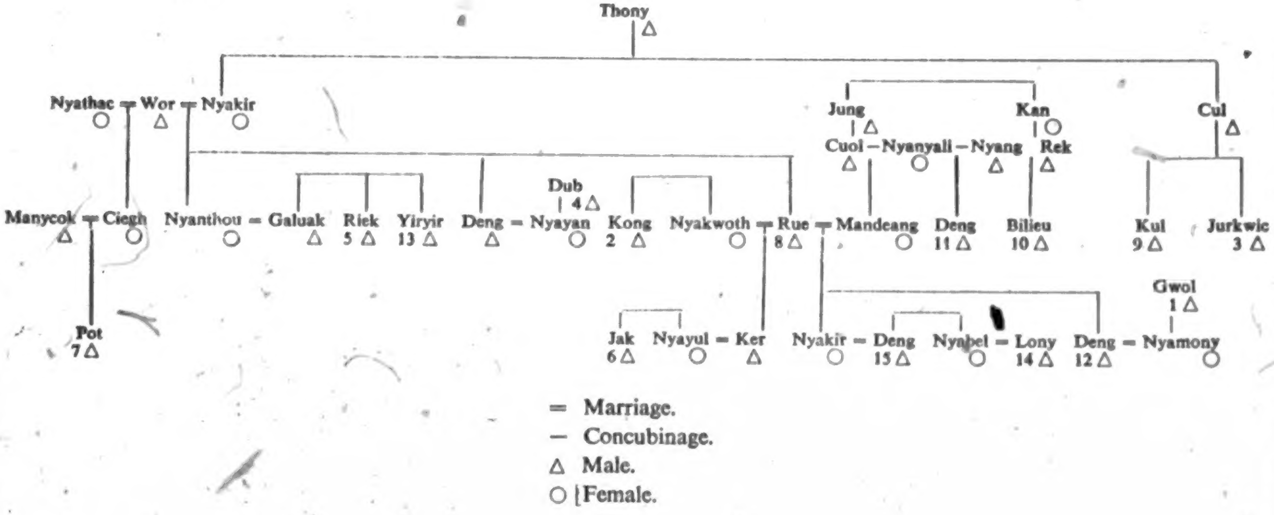
[1] [Cf. cat. 116, p. (10) -- Analyst]


N
W
E
S
11
1
10
9
2
Common Kraal
8
3
7
6
5
4
Cattle byre
Dwelling hut
Windscreen

Sketch-map of Konye Village

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931,1936) 1951

FJ22 Nuer FJ22


Thony
Nyathac = Wor = Nyakir
Jung
Kan
Cul
Cuol – Nyanyali – Nyang
Rek
Dub
4
Manycok = Ciegh
Nyanthou = Galuak
Riek
5
Yiryir
13
Deng = Nyayan
Kong
2
Nyakwoth = Rue = Mandeang
8
Deng
11
Bilieu
10
Kul
9
Jurkwic
3
Gwol
1
Pot
7
Jak
6
Nyayul = Ker
Nyakir = Deng
15
Nyabel = Lony
14
Deng = Nyamony
12
= Marriage.
– Concubinage.
△ Male.
○ Female.

KONYE VILLAGE

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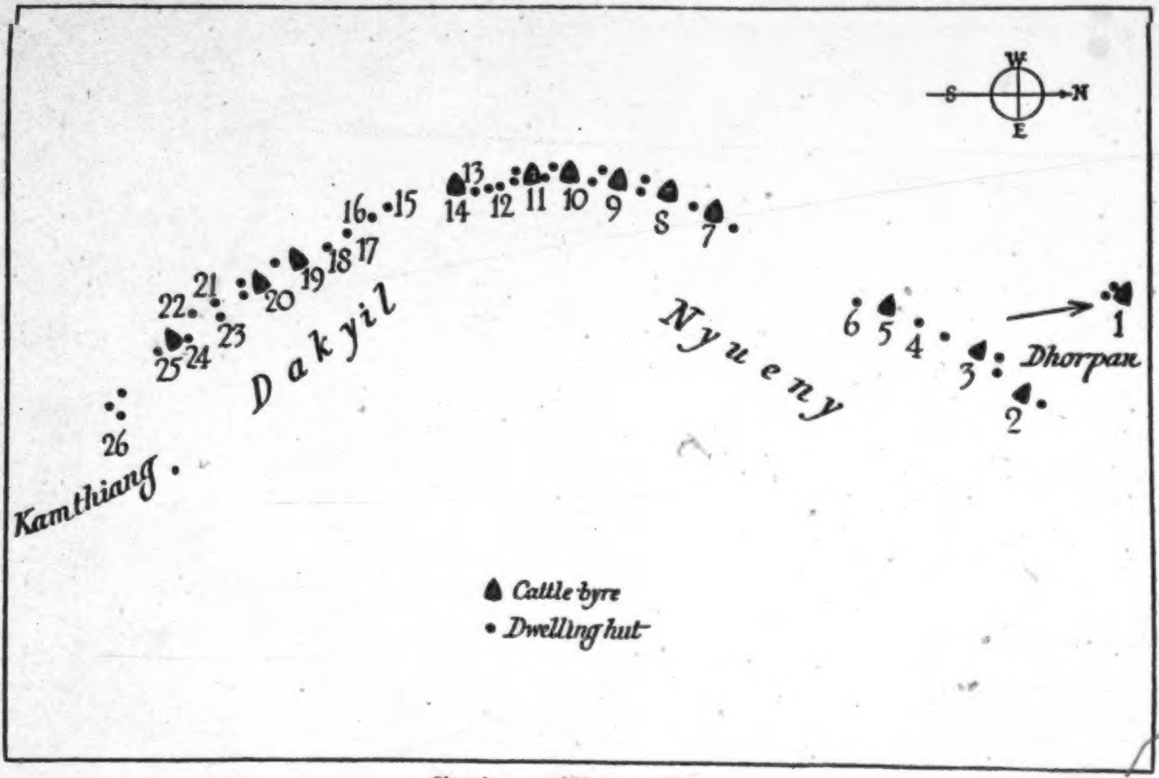
c 621 602 .601 and I must here say again that although *mar* is properly kinship traced through father or mother, long-standing affinal relationships count in Nuer eyes as being equal to kinship, being a kind of kinship through the children of marriage unions, especially when the affinal relatives live together, as so many of them do at Konye. As a Nuer at another village, Kurmayom on the Sobat river, put it: 'Well, you have seen my home and the people who live here; are they not the husbands of my sisters? Well, all our cattle are exhausted from giving them to our brothers-in-law. They are our people and form part of our community (*cieng*) Nyabor. Their children are known by the names of their mothers while they remain in our village. If they go to the homes of their fathers they will be known by the names of their fathers'. Affines may therefore be regarded in a general social sense as *mar* and we may speak of Konye community as a cluster of kin.

[101] My second example is the village of Nyueny in the Leek tribal territory of western Nuerland. I spent five weeks there in 1936. The village is spread along the arc of a sandy ridge for about a mile and a half. It comprises three hamlets, Nyueny, Dakyil, and Kamthiang, and about a mile to the north of it lies the hamlet of Dhorpan, the occupants of which used to form part of the main village. In 1936 the population of Nyueny was reckoned to be about 130 souls, distributed in twenty-six homesteads. As I had already recorded the genealogical pattern of other Nuer villages and camps I did not aim at drawing up a complete genealogy for Nyueny, but rather at a survey of domestic unions. Consequently the kinship links between the owners of four homesteads (numbers 1, 5, 22, and 26)‡ and other persons in the village cannot be stated. This merely means that the relationship did not emerge from an inquiry conducted to other ends than their discovery, for links of some kind may confidently be assumed to exist. It should also be pointed out that there are other connexions between some of the persons whose names are shown on the chart which are not indicated there, though they are recorded elsewhere,* and there may be others unknown to me. Only persons significant for the present discussion are tabled, and I have simplified the presentation by treating ghost-marriages as though they were simple legal marriages.

---

* 'Some Aspects of Marriage and the Family among the Nuer', *Rhodes-Livingstone Paper* No. 11, 1945, pp. 29 ff.

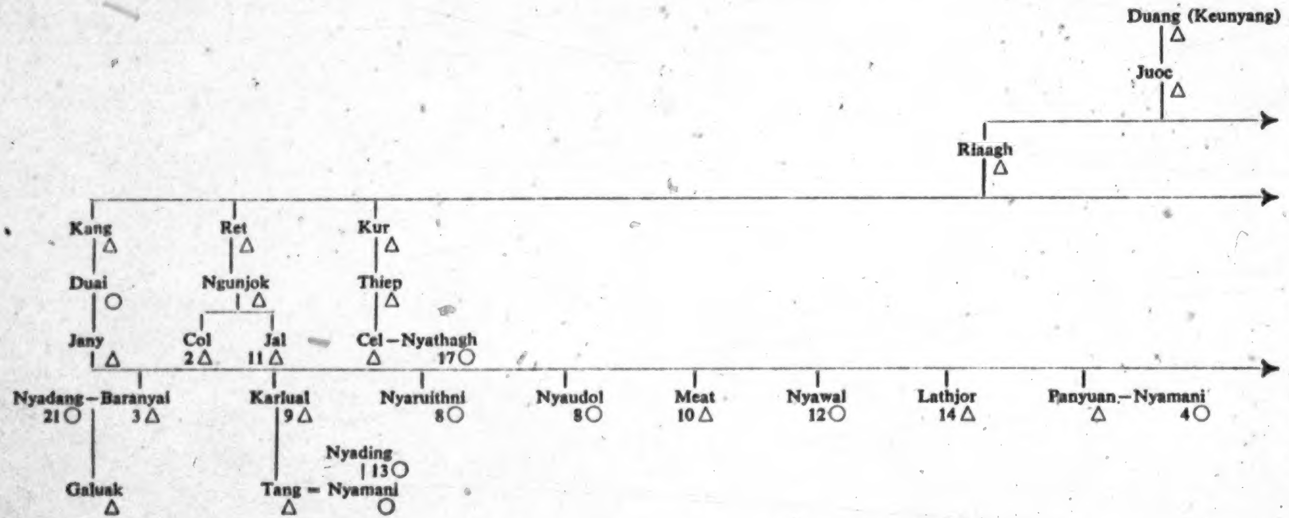
‡[cf. cat. 116, p. (13) -- Analyst]

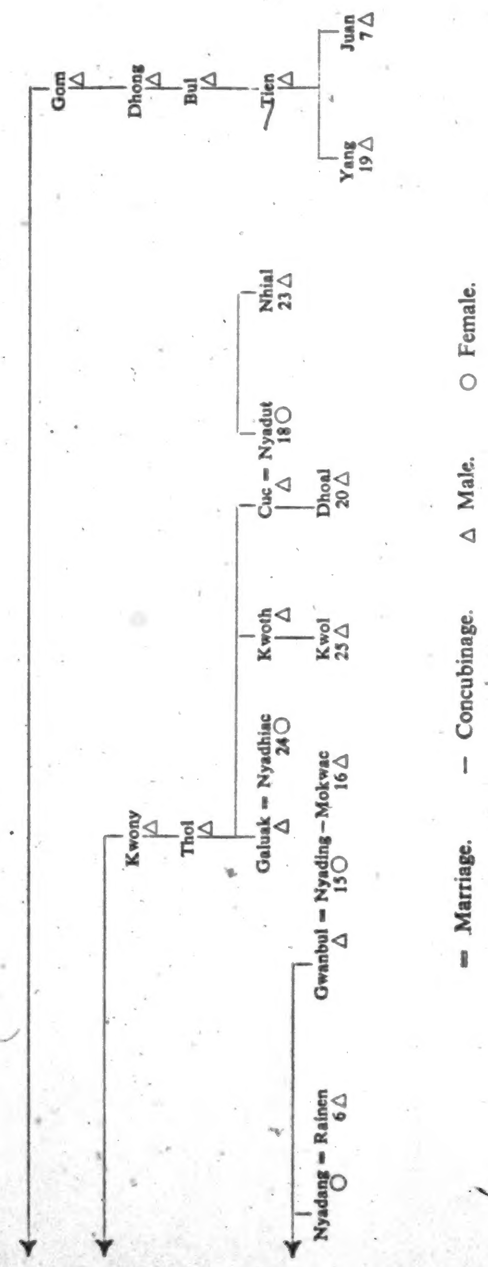

W
S
N
E
Kamthiang
Dakyil
Nyueny
Dhorpan
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
▲ Cattle byre
• Dwelling hut

Sketch-map of Nyueny Village

601
621

NYUENY VILLAGE


Duang (Keunyang)
Juoc
Riaagh
Kang
Ret
Kur
Duai
Ngunjok
Thiep
Jany
Col 2
Jal 11
Cel – Nyathagh 17
Nyadang – Baranyai 21 3
Karlual 9
Nyaruithni 8
Nyaudol 8
Meat 10
Nyawal 12
Lathjor 14
Panyuan – Nyamani 4
Nyading 13
Galuak
Tang = Nyamani


Gom △
Dhong △
Bul △
Tien △
Yang 19 △
Juan 7 △
Kwony △
Thol △
Galuak = Nyadhiac 24 ○
△
Kwoth △
Kwol 25 △
Cuc = Nyadut 18 ○
△
Dhoal 20 △
Nhial 23 △
Nyadang = Rainen 6 △
○
Gwanbul = Nyading – Mokwac 16 △
△ 15 ○
= Marriage.
– Concubinage.
△ Male.
○ Female.

KINSHIP AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

621 613 614 602 The village site belongs to the Riaagh lineage of the Keunyang maximal lineage of the Gaatbol clan, the dominant clan in Leek tribal area of which Karlual area, where Nyueny is situated, is a section. Members of that lineage with their wives and concubines and their affines account for ten out of the twenty-six homesteads. The people of Nyueny hamlet, the central and northern parts of the village, are known as 'the children of Jany', and Jany's descendants with their wives and concubines and affines account for another ten homesteads. 'The children of Jany', whose *tut* is Karlual (homestead 9),[a] count collectively as *gaatwac*, children of the paternal aunt, or, as Nuer often put it, *gaatnyiet*, children of daughters, to the Riaagh lineage, whom they call *gaatnar*, children of the maternal uncle. The senior Riaagh men are the 'bulls' of the village in the tribal sense of the word *tut*.

621 602 It will again be observed that the village is not an exclusive lineage group (with its wives) but is a cluster of kin (including affines). In this case, however, there is a lineage core to the village community, and this core is that branch of the dominant clan of the tribe which owns the village site. Some members of its collateral minimal lineage, the Gom, also live in the village. I draw attention to further typical features. We saw that at Konye many of the heads of families were living there because of affinal relationships with other members of the village. The counterpart to this is the relationship of sister's son to mother's brother, for when the children of a resident sister or daughter grow up in a village those who stand in an affinal relationship to their father stand in an avuncular relationship to them. This is a very significant feature of Nuer local communities and from it follows another common feature: in course of time a maternal link of this kind may be treated as though it were a paternal link and therefore within the genealogical structure of the principal lineage of the community. Jany's mother Duai is so treated. Nuer say of a woman who has this structural position that 'she has become a man'. Cognation becomes regarded for ordinary social purposes [541] within community life as equal to agnation. A sister's son–mother's brother relationship may come about in a village not by a man going to live with his wife's people but by widows bringing their children to live with their own people after their husbands have died, a mode of residence which in certain circumstances may continue after the deaths of the mothers. This

[a] [Cf. cat. 116, p. (13)-- Analyst]

is illustrated at Nyueny by the daughters of Jany. The widows 621
may take lovers in the village, or they may take them from a 602
different village and their lovers come to live with them. This
custom is another feature of interest, for some ties between
members of a village may be through widow-concubines, or even
through unmarried concubines. Any such ties are *mar*, kinship.

Allowing for the fact I have mentioned,[1] that when people live 621
together as members of the same small local community female 602
links are often given equivalence to male links in a genealogy, 613
a cluster of kin such as that of Nyueny can be presented as
descended from a common ancestor. It might be described as a cognatic lineage, but in speaking of the Nuer I think it wise to restrict the term 'lineage' to a group of agnates within a system of such groups and to speak of a cluster like that of Nyueny as being a lineage to which are attached, on account of common residence, other lines of kin through females. For if an attached family or extended family of this kind were to leave the common residence the link which binds them to the lineage would cease to be significant for them and would lose its importance in favour of some new link more appropriate to their new attachment, whatever that might be, in their new village. Within a cluster of this kind relations between persons are regulated by the values of the kinship system. Seen as a unit from the outside, and in its corporate relations with other village communities, lineage values are dominant.

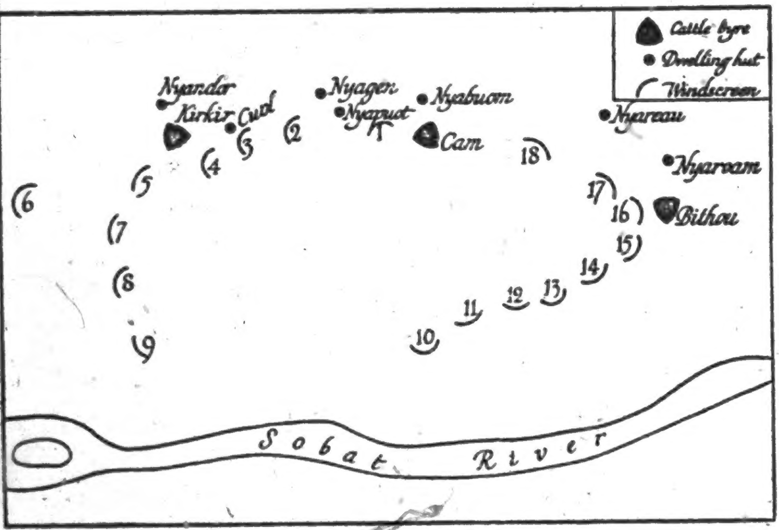
I now examine the kinship texture of a cattle camp at which I
resided for close on three months in 1931. Yakwac is a small [101]
mound on the left bank of the Sobat. Like Nyueny, it is on the 361
periphery of Nuerland where the Lou tribe faces the small Balak Dinka people who at one time occupied both banks of the river. I should explain that it was necessity rather than choice which led me to spend a large part of my time among the Lou Nuer at peripheral points. As I had no land transport and the Lou could not be induced to act as porters I had to rely on transport by canoe, and the larger rivers are in many places the tribal frontiers.

Yakwac village consists—I speak of 1931—of only three byres
and a few attached huts. The chief man of the village is Cam- 621
Carau, who owns one of the byres, the other two being owned by 602
Bithou, his brother, and Kirkir, a kinsman of his mother. The real
'bull' of the village is, however, Cam's mother, Nyagen, and the

[1] [cf. cat. 116, p. (16)--Analyst]

621 village is often spoken of as *cieng* Nyagen. She has what amounts
602 to the honorary status of a man, not only on account of her age
and kinship status, but also, and principally, because she is a Lou
[566] aristocrat and it is through her that Cam and his family link
themselves on to the dominant lineage of the area in which they
live, for Cam is a Jikany tribesman and, although an aristocrat in
his own tribal territory, a stranger in the Lou country. He married
his first wife to the name of his maternal uncle, Dar, with Dar's cattle, so that his eldest son and the other children born of this wife count as Dar's children and not as his own; and as Dar and Cam are of different clans and tribes, the distinction between pater and genitor is emphasized. His eldest son, Wia, belongs to the dominant clan of the Lou territory and he does not.

[361]



Sketch-map of Yakwac Cattle Camp

In many years Cam's maternal kinsmen, the minor lineage known as *cieng* Pual, the community (of the descendants) of Puol, come during the dry season to water and pasture their cattle and to fish and bathe at Yakwac from their inland village of Majok in the Nyerol district. This minor lineage has four branches—the minimal lineages of Diel, Malual, Kwoth, and Mar—members of all of which figure in the genealogy of the camp.

The entire population of Majok was not at Yakwac in 1931, for

The entire population of Majok was not at Yakwac in 1931, for
621 many of its members, including most of the womenfolk, had
602 remained inland and some families spent the dry season at other
601 camps on the Sobat. The women who came to Yakwac slept in the huts of the village, so no grass beehive huts were erected. The population of the camp was about eighty souls. I have again simplified the genealogy by showing ghost-marriages as simple legal marriages, but I have indicated, as I have not done in the other genealogies presented in this chapter, those members of the camp who are known to be Dinka or of Dinka descent. Those among them who are shown as members of the Pual lineage have been adopted into one of its branches. The names of only a few women and none of small children are given in the genealogical table, which is intended to demonstrate the kinship ties between the occupants of the windscreens, all of whom, with the exception of the mother of Cam, are males.

621 A study of the genealogy of Yakwac cattle camp reveals the
613 features we have already noted as being significant in the gene-
601 alogy of Nyueny. It is a lineage structure—the lineage being a branch of the dominant clan in the tribal area and that branch which is dominant in the district in which the camp was formed—to which are attached other lines through females, thus giving the genealogy a cognatic form, and affines. In order to graft themselves on to the tree of this dominant clan the linked families trace their descent through females at the points of graft as though these women had been men. It was a long time before I discovered, for example, that Kirkir's paternal grandfather was Buom and not Kol. A rather unusual example in which this process is strikingly illustrated is the line of ascent of Deng-Nyajal through females in three generations to the point of graft, Gai. Nyanhial and her daughter Nyajal were captured by the Anuak on a raid into Lou country and for many years lived in Anuakland, where Deng was begotten by an Anuak father. In the camp Deng was always referred to as Deng-Nyajal after his mother and not as Deng-Cul after his father, because Nyajal, and not Cul, is genealogically significant in Deng's social milieu. In the same way we referred always to Cuol as Cuol-Mer and not as Cuol-Rwac. In this cluster of kin at Yakwac camp the importance of affinal and maternal ties is evident.

613 I have indicated Dinka origins,[1] where I have satisfactory evi-
601 dence for them, partly to show the very considerable absorption
597 [1] [cf. facing pp. 19 (a)-(c) -- Analyst]

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931,1936) 1951

FJ22 Nuer FJ22

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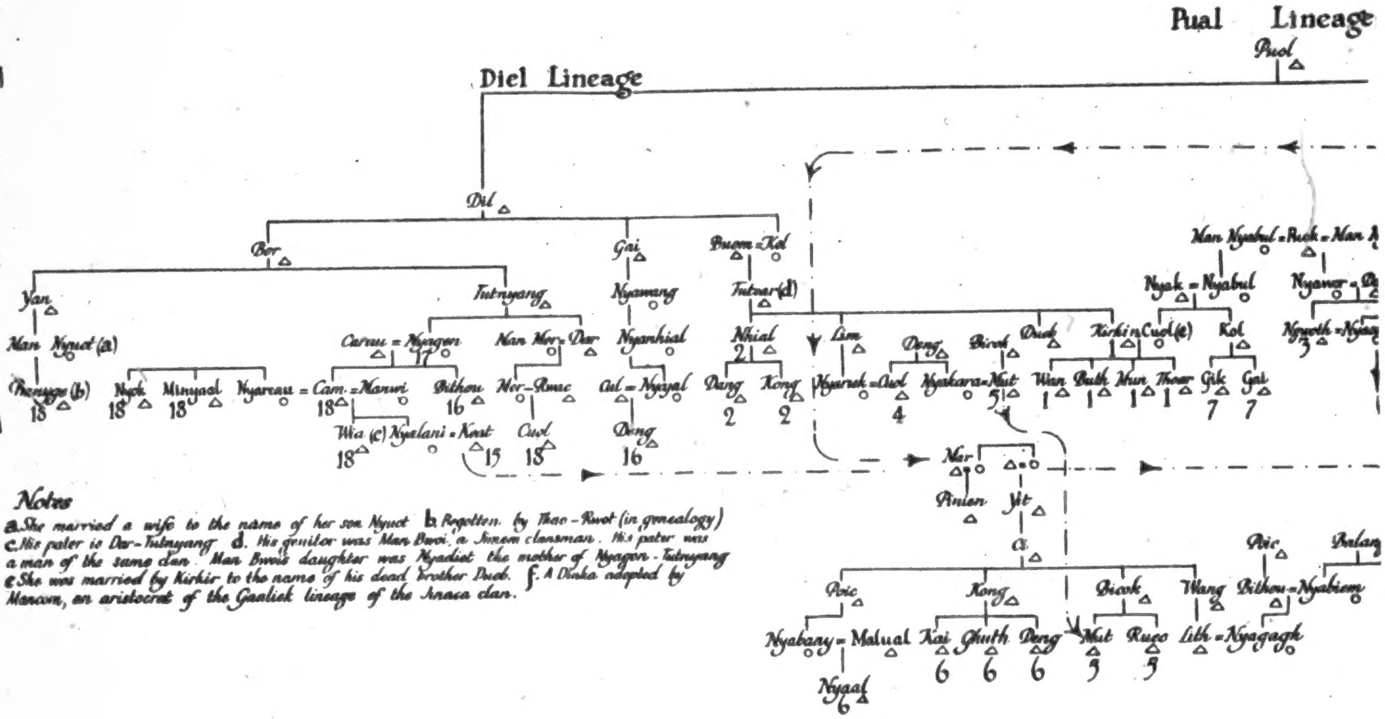
[facing p 19 (a)]


Pual Lineage
Puol
Diel Lineage
Dil
Bor
Gai
Buom = Kol
Yan
Tutnyang
Nyamang
Tutnar (d)
Man Nyuot (a)
Carau = Nyagen
17
Nan Mer = Dar
Nyanhial
Nhial
2
Lim
Deng
Birol
Duob
Kirkir = Cuol (e)
Kol
Man Nyabul = Ruck = Man
Nyak = Nyabul
Nyanor
Nyuoth = Nyag
3
Benyjar (b)
18
Nyok
18
Minyaal
18
Nyareau = Cam = Nanwi
18
Bithou
16
Mer = Rmac
Aul = Nyagal
Dang
2
Kong
2
Nyarnek = Aul
4
Nyakara = Mut
5
Wan
1
Buth
1
Nun
1
Thoar
1
Gik
7
Gat
7
Wia (c) Nyalani = Kent
18
15
Cuol
18
Deng
16
Mar
Pinien
Yit
a
Poic
Balang
Poic
Kong
Bicok
Wang
Bithou = Nyabiem
Nyabany = Malual
Kai
6
Ghuth
6
Deng
6
Mut
5
Ruco
5
Lith = Nyagagh
Nyaal
6

Notes

a. She married a wife to the name of her son Nyuot. b. Begotten by Thao-Ruot (in genealogy). c. His pater is Dar-Tutnyang. d. His genitor was Man Bwoi, a Jinom clansman. His pater was a man of the same clan. Man Bwoi's daughter was Nyadiet the mother of Nyagen-Tutnyang. e. She was married by Kirkir to the name of his dead brother Duob. f. A Dinka adopted by Mancom, an aristocrat of the Gaaliak lineage of the Anaca clan.

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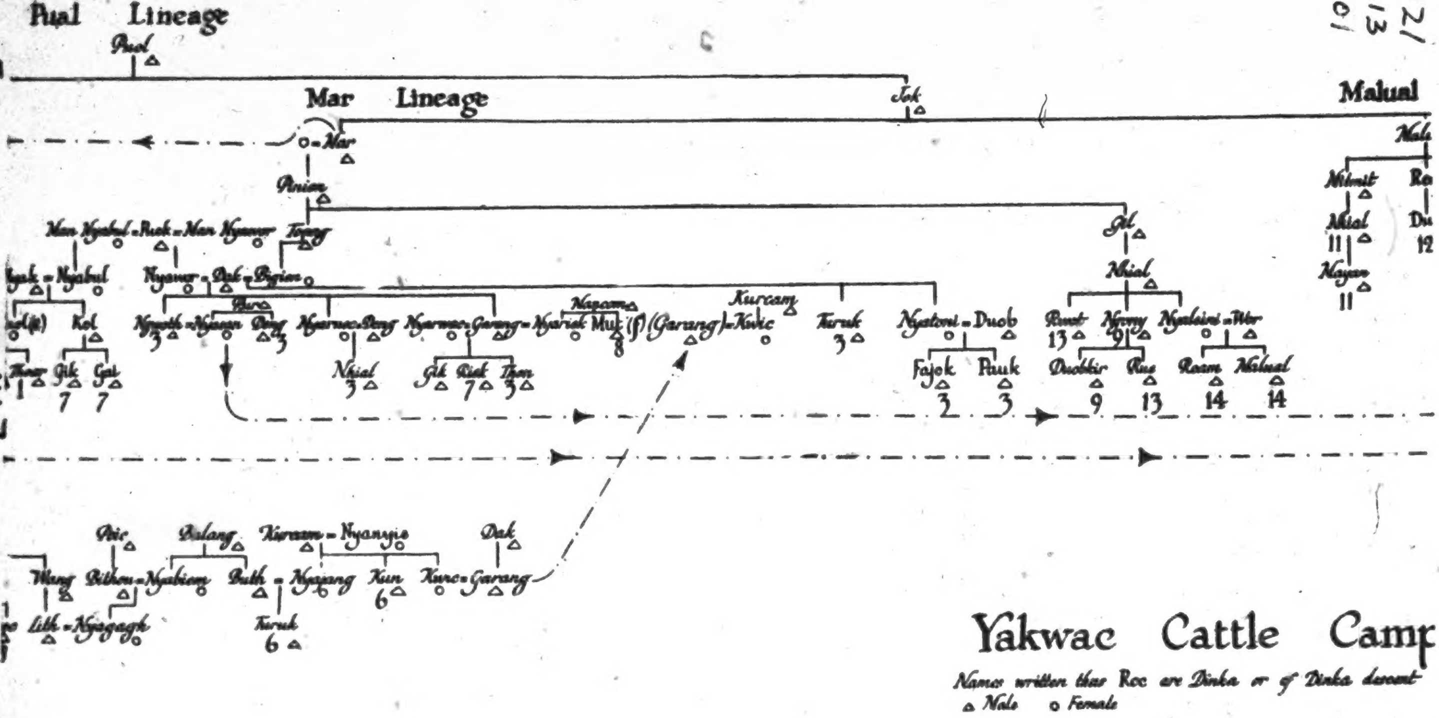
[facing p. 19 (6)]


Pual Lineage
Pual
Jok
Mar Lineage
Malual
Mar
Mali
Nitmit
Ro
Pinien
Mial
11
Du
12
Nayan
11
Gil
Nhial
Man Nyabul = Ruok = Man Nyanwar
Tiang
Nyak = Nyabul
Nyanwar = Dak = Bigien
Kol
Buro
Nyuoth = Nyaan
3
Bang
3
Nyaruac = Bang
Nyarwac = Garang = Nyarial
Nyacam
Muk (f) (Garang) = Kwic
8
Kurcam
Turuk
3
Nyatoni = Duob
Rout
13
Nyony
9
Nyalaini = Wor
Thew
1
Gik
7
Gat
7
Nhial
3
Gik
Riek
7
Thon
3
Fajok
2
Pauk
3
Duobkir
9
Rue
13
Roam
14
Malual
14
Poic
Bulang
Kuraam = Nyanyis
Dak
Wang
8
Bithow = Nyabiem
Buth = Nyajang
6
Kun
6
Kuac = Garang
Lith = Nyagagh
Turuk
6

Yakwac Cattle Camp

Names written thus Roc are Dinka or of Dinka descent

△ Male ○ Female

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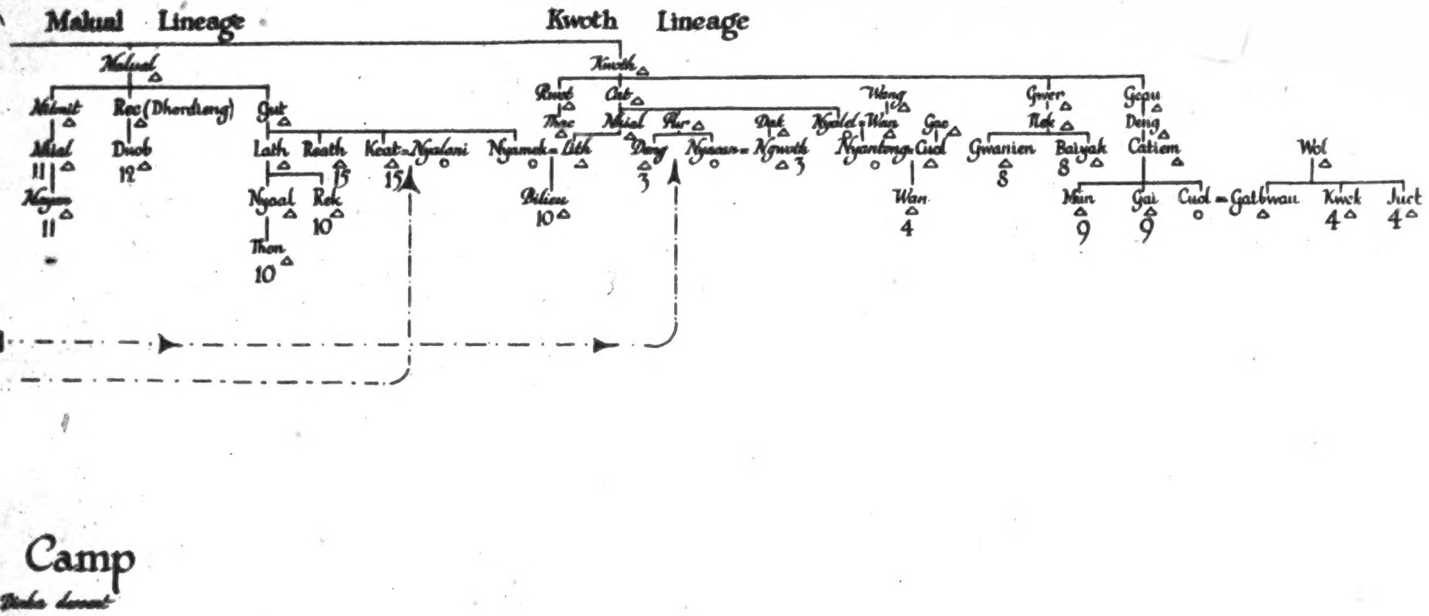
2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931,1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

[facing p. 19 (c)]


Malual Lineage
Kwoth Lineage
Malual
Milmit
Rec (Dhordiang)
Gut
Mial
11
Nyon
11
Duob
12
Lath
Reath
15
Keat = Nyalani
15
Nyamok = Lith
Nyoal
Rek
10
Thon
10
Biliew
10
Kwoth
Rwot
Thoc
Cat
Mial
Pur
Deng
3
Nyacan = Ngwoth
3
Dak
Wang
Nyaled = Wan
Nyantang = Cuol
Gae
Wan
4
Gwer
Tek
Gwanien
8
Baiyak
8
Gopu
Deng
Catiem
Mun
9
Gai
9
Cuol = Gatbwau
Wol
Kwek
4
Juet
4
Camp
Dinka descent

613 601 597 of Dinka which has taken place, by adoption into Nuer lineages and through marriage, in a typical Nuer community, and partly to account for some marriages which might otherwise appear to be breaches of the Nuer rules of exogamy. These Dinka are of varied tribal origin. Among those whose names appear in the genealogy I have recorded Bor, Fadang, Luac, Thoc, and Dunjol origins. The absorption of so many Dinka has affected, through the practice of adoption, the rules regulating marriage, and it has also affected modes of residence, since a Dinka who has not been adopted into a Nuer lineage readily attaches himself to his wife's people or to the people who have married his sister or daughter, as do also his children to their maternal uncle's kin. The absorption of Dinka has led to a further complication in the already very complicated patterns of Nuer genealogies, for it sometimes happens that captured Dinka brothers or other kin are adopted into different lineages or even into different clans.

I would also draw attention to the different tribal origins of those Nuer in the genealogy who are not members of the dominant lineage, because they illustrate the movement of individuals and families which is so characteristic a feature of Nuer society: Yit was a Bul tribesman, he and Pinien being children of sisters or, as the Nuer say, a man and his *gatmanlende*, his mother's sister's son; Carau and Wan-Wang were Jikany tribesmen, Carau being an aristocrat of the Lony section of the Jikany, though begotten by an Anuak; Nhial-Deng is of Thiang tribal origin; Kurcam was a man of the Jimem clan, a clan which is found throughout Nuerland and without a tribal territory of its own; and so forth. Indeed, it is necessary to point out that not all outsiders attached to a lineage core remain attached to it. Nuer move about their country freely, and reside for some years with one lot of kin and then for some years with another.

621 613 The genealogy of Yakwac camp gives us a typical cross-section of a Nuer tribal society. We see how the local community is built up around a lineage through attachment to it of extra-lineage persons by the stressing of one or other category of kinship, and we thus see further the relation of the lineage structure to the kinship system within the framework of the tribal society. The collateral, and in a structural sense, opposed lineage to the Pual is the Dumien, who live near Pul Thul and Pul Nyerol in the same Nyerol district in which the Pual have their wet-season home and

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who, like them, often camp on the Sobat river in the drought. A genealogical analysis of the Dumien community would disclose the same kind of cluster as has been disclosed for the Pual community—a *thok dwiel*, lineage, to which are linked in many different ways through kinship values *rul*, strangers, and *jang*, Dinka, the whole forming a *cieng*, a local community who are kin. Pual and Dumien together form a single major lineage called Leng, the collateral to which is the Nyarkwac lineage whose home is adjacent to the home of the Leng. The Nyarkwac lineage in its community form consists of similar clusters composed of its branches and their accretions. Leng and Nyarkwac lineages form the Gaatbal maximal lineage, occupying the northern part of the Lou tribal territory and one of the three maximal lineages of the Jinaca clan, which is the dominant clan of the Lou tribe.

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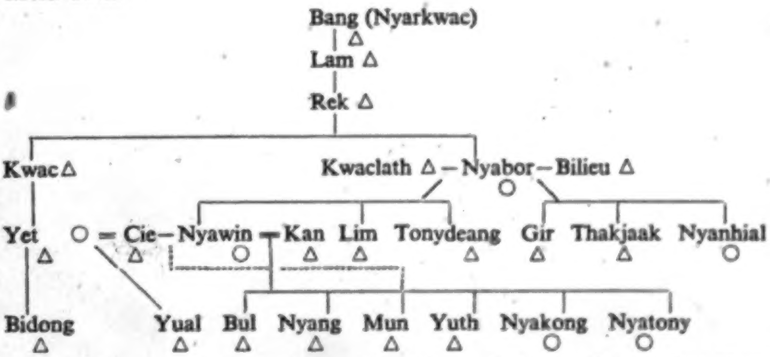
My final illustration is included to draw special attention to natural, as contrasted with what we may call legal, ties of kinship in Nuer society. These are brought about by unions other than the union of simple legal marriage and are very numerous in Nuerland. I explain their nature in Chapter III. The recognition of natural ties in the Nuer system of kinship values as social ties, and not merely as natural relationships, further enhances the significance of women as persons through whom descent is traced for the purpose of establishing kinship with those with whom Nuer have relations in their community life.

[101]

I quoted earlier in this chapter a remark made to me by a Nuer of Kurmayom, where I spent about three weeks in 1931. Kurmayom is a village of the Lou tribe to the west of Yakwac and, like it, on the Sobat river. It is near the border between the Lou tribe and the Ngok Dinka. The most prominent person in the village is a noted magician called Bul-Kan, and it is his family that I shall now briefly examine. He and the cluster of kin around him occupy eleven byres in the chief hamlet of the village. He is a member of a minimal lineage called (*cieng*) Nyabor after the name of his mother's mother. She was a woman of the Nyarkwac major lineage of the Jinaca clan who bore her children in unmarried concubinage to two men. The fathers legitimatized their children by payment of cattle. Lim, Nyawin, and Tonydeang thus became members of the Jidiet clan since their pater, called Kwaclath, was a man of this clan, and Gir, Thakjaak, and Nyanhial became members of the Jimem clan, their pater Bilieu being

621 a man of this clan. One of these children, the girl Nyawin, married
602 Kan-Kwoth of the Kiek clan, to whom she bore Yuth, Nyakong,
601 and Nyatony before he died. She continued to live in his home after his death and there took a lover, a man of the Ngok Dinka called Cie, to whom she bore Bul, Nyang, and Mun. These three sons count, of course, as children of Kan-Kwoth. The Dinka Cie then, at the behest of Nyawin and her sons, took a wife to himself with cattle of the herd of Kan-Kwoth and by her begat Yual. Yual was therefore not only a natural paternal half-brother of Bul, Nyang, and Mun but also their brother in a further sense, for he was *gat ghokien*, the child of their cattle. I was told that he had also been formally adopted by Bul into his lineage. Mun had died before 1931, and Bul and Nyang were already elderly men whose sons and daughters had homes and herds and children of their own.

[613]



It will be noted that, although Bul is called after his father Kan and is a member of the Kiek clan and his mother was a woman of the Jidiet clan, the lineage now call themselves *cieng* Nyabor and trace their ascent through Nyabor into the stem of the Nyarkwac branch of the dominant Jinaca clan, neglecting for ordinary social purposes the lines of descent of both Kan and Kwaclath. They attach themselves in this way to the lineage which owns the village site and with whom the tribal section in which it is situated is identified, its chief 'bull' in the village being Bidong-Yet, whose name I have therefore inserted in the table.

IV

621 The kinship relations of persons to one another in a Nuer com-
602 munity are, I think it will be agreed, very complex. Indeed they

are more complex than I have shown them to be so far, as will appear when the forms of domestic union obtaining among the Nuer are described. The complexity is partly due to these diverse forms of marriage, and also to the python-like assimilation by the Nuer of vast numbers of Dinka through adoption or intermarriage. 621
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However, certain preliminary conclusions of a general kind can be drawn from the few genealogies—only a fraction of those collected—I have cited as examples. A Nuer community, whether small or big, is not composed exclusively of members of a single lineage and their wives or, correspondingly, not all members of a lineage live in the same community. On the other hand, in any large village or camp there is represented an agnatic lineage of one or other order and into the growth of this lineage are grafted, through the tracing of descent through females, branches which are regarded in certain situations and in a certain sense as part of it and in other situations and in a different sense as not part of it. Other lines and persons are grafted into the lineage by adoption, but this can only happen to Dinka and other foreigners, not to men of true Nuer origin. Attached to the lineage, directly or indirectly, are also a considerable number of affines of diverse kinds. 621
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In their collective relations with other communities, and as seen collectively by the members of these communities, there is a fusion of the attached elements with the lineage. They are incorporated in it, and the resultant whole is spoken of as the *cieng* or *wec*, community, of the lineage, which is both its core and the symbol of its social identity as a unit in the tribal system. But within the community itself there are occasions when a formal distinction between the lineage and its incorporated elements has to be made and the status of its members has to be defined to the exclusion of the *rul*, strangers: the *gaatnyiet*, the children of daughters (of the lineage), and the affines. 621
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In daily contacts between persons within the community their relations are expressed not in the language of lineage structure but in the language of the kinship system by reference to categories of kinship within that system. Thus men of the same minimal lineage have only an undifferentiated lineage relationship on such occasions as the lineage acts or is thought of as a group. Otherwise, and as persons, their relationship to one another is one of *gwanlen*, 621 613 602 father's brother, *gatgwanlen*, father's brother's son, *wac*, father's sister, and so on.

613 602 Lineages are articulated as groups of agnatic kin at a different, usually ritual, level of the social life, and they are articulated as conglomerates, fused with other elements, at the political level. Kinship ties belong to another order of social relations, relations between persons and not between groups. The members of a lineage group are socially undifferentiated as such in the inter-lineage structure because it is a structural relationship between groups. In the kinship system they are socially differentiated by category and degree of relationship—this being an essential characteristic of the system—because the kinship system is a system of relationships between persons.

621 602 As we have seen, members of a Nuer community are all *mar*, kin (including affines in this term), to one another. Whoever is kith must also be kin. Common membership of a village or camp does not in itself provide a man with a secure basis for his personal relations with its other members. That is provided chiefly by the kinship system by which a kinship tie established with any person in the village or camp gives a man a kinship status of some kind with every other person in the village or camp—with all his neighbours. Consequently a local community consists of a great number of cross-strands which compose an intricate network of kinship ties.

The relationships which enter into any particular composition are not the same as those of another, and they change from year to year and from season to season inasmuch as Nuer frequently change their place of residence. Therefore a cluster of kin of this kind does not constitute a specific kinship group. When it is thought of by Nuer as a unit it is not as a kinship group but as a residential group by association with a lineage or site. Its members are *jicieng* so-and-so, the people of a community of a certain lineage, or *ji* such-and-such, the people of a certain place. To any member of the community the rest are '*jiciengda*', 'the people of my home'. '*Jimarida*', 'my kin', has quite a different connotation; it is a set of personal relationships to him and includes men and women who do not belong to the cluster at all.

597 563 613 The absorption of Dinka into these communities of kin on so considerable a scale has been significant. As I have pointed out in *The Nuer*, assimilation of conquered Dinka tribes and tribal sections has not, for various reasons, resulted in a class or caste, or in

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1. A boy, clothed in ashes

[facing p. 24]

597 any other rigid hierarchical structure. It has been brought about
563 by their incorporation into Nuer lineages by adoption and by
613 their assimilation to them through intermarriage. When Dinka are adopted into a lineage, absorption into Nuer society presents no great difficulty. Their Dinka origin is remembered by members of the lineage of their adoption, at any rate for some generations, but after one or two generations it may not be known to outsiders; and I suppose that in course of time it may be forgotten within the lineage itself. They are part of the lineage, have the same status as its other members, and are points of growth in the branch equal to men born into it. But when Dinka are not adopted into a Nuer lineage absorption is achieved with greater difficulty and by circuitous means. If we examine closely the history of those persons in the genealogies I have recorded who have attached themselves permanently to an affinal or maternal family and through it to a minimal lineage, and if we trace also the histories of those persons who through such an attachment in the past now trace their descent from the lineage through a female, we shall find that in a very great number, I venture to say in the vast majority, of cases they are Dinka. This is a development which it is easy to understand because captured Dinka or Dinka immigrants into Nuerland have lost their status in their own kinship and lineage systems, and if they are not adopted into Nuer lineages they can only acquire status in Nuer society through affinal relationships; and their children, having no kin on the father's side, identify themselves with the mother's kin and, having no lineage on the father's side, seek affiliation to the mother's lineage. It is true that
621 we find strangers of Nuer clans as members of clusters of kin
614 around a lineage core of the dominant clan of the tribe, but where the attachment is permanent these strangers are, in my experience, generally persons of those Nuer clans which have no tribal territory of their own—no *wec*, local community, as Nuer say—like the Jimem, Jikul, and Kiek clans. These clans have, moreover, in some cases mythological beginnings placing them outside the main family of Nuer clans and suggesting foreign origin. Assimilation in such cases can never be so complete as in the case of Dinka, because members of Nuer clans have their own clan symbols and their own *buth* relationships which attach them to the lineages of their birth.

000 Another factor which has certainly had some influence in

Another factor which has certainly had some influence in
588 bringing about attachments of outsiders to groups of agnatic kin
other than their own is the custom of concubinage, the different
[591] forms of which I describe in detail later. It is a very common prac-
tice for widows to leave their dead husbands' homes and to take
lovers in the villages of their parents, or to go to reside in the
[593] villages of their lovers. When they do so they take their young
children with them, and though the sons almost invariably return
to their paternal homes before initiation, they have grown up in
the homes of their maternal kinsmen, or of their foster fathers'
kin, and may have so strong an affection for them that they later
return to reside with them, at any rate for a time, when they are
married men and their own masters.

Widows, whether living in their maternal villages or in their dead husbands' villages, attract lovers, sometimes from the village, sometimes from a neighbouring village. In either case a new social tie is established, and the lovers may continue to cohabit with the widows as members of their communities for long periods and nurture the children they beget by them. A poor man is only too glad to obtain a housekeeper and mate without expense by means of either widow-concubinage or unmarried concubinage, and if he is an unadopted Dinka he may remain with the concubine and his children by her.

There are in Nuerland a considerable number of unmarried concubines. The sons they bear to lovers become the legal children of these lovers by payment of cattle, but they do not feel so securely attached to the homes of their fathers as do children born of the union of marriage, and there is a tendency for sons of the same woman by different fathers to stick together, usually wherever their mother may be, especially if the fathers are dead or if they do not possess large herds.

591 There are two other facts to be taken into consideration. Among Nuer it is not uncommon for a man to make his home among his wife's people, though in my experience a true Nuer usually returns to his own people eventually. As I have explained, sons-in-law who live with their wives' people are often Dinka, and Dinka are likely to remain with their affines, as they may have no kin of their own to return to; but one also finds Nuer in the same position. These may be persons who for one reason or another prefer to live apart from their paternal kin, or they may be poor men who cannot afford to pay the full bridewealth, part of which is forgone by the

wife's family in view of the fact that the man who has married 591 their daughter has joined their community and is bringing up his children as members of it. They may even give him some of their own cattle to help him build up a herd. The second fact to be taken [603] into consideration is the Nuer custom, for various reasons not always observed, by which the eldest child of a marriage is brought up by his, or her, maternal grandparents. A child brought up in his maternal kinsmen's village naturally feels that in some respects it, and not his paternal kinsmen's village, is his home.

Cattle are a powerful element, often the deciding consideration, 591 especially in the minds of unadopted Dinka captives or immi- 233 grants, in a man's choice of residence. A Nuer cannot live for long without cattle, and he who possesses none must attach himself to the byre and herd of some kinsman. Men with only a few beasts also sometimes find it a convenience to tether them in the byre of a kinsman rather than build a byre of their own. One often finds that the reason a man decides to live with one of his maternal kin, with a paternal aunt, with one of his affinal kin, or with the family of a widow-concubine, is that he knows that the person he intends to reside with will allow him to be a member of the household, will give shelter to his animals if he has any, and will help him to start a herd if he lacks cattle entirely; whereas his paternal kinsmen are unable or unwilling to do so, or, in the case of many Dinka, are altogether absent.

As a further conclusion, I remark again that the drawing 621 together by, and into, the lineage system of the many different strands of kinship (and affinity) which compose the network of social ties in each local community gives the community its unitary character and fixes its position in tribal structure. The points at which they are drawn together are the 'bulls' of the kinship clusters, and especially the tribal 'bulls', those men who are persons not only of age, wealth, and character, but also members of the dominant clan of the tribe—tribal aristocrats. These tribal 'bulls' are the centres of clusters of kin, but they are also agnates, and each has in relation to the others a structural position in the lineage system of the dominant clan. Through them, therefore, all the tribesmen are attached to the dominant clan of the tribe and all the local communities are assimilated to the highly consistent structure of its segments, in which they are conceptualized. It is

621 the ambition of every man, of the dominant clan especially, to become a 'bull' and the centre of a cluster of kin, and Nuer say that it is for this reason among others that families often break up and cousins and brothers part, each to seek to gather his own community around him.

621 I suggest that it is the clear, consistent, and deeply rooted
613 lineage structure of the Nuer which permits persons and families
611 to move about and attach themselves so freely, for shorter or longer periods, to whatever community they choose by whatever cognatic or affinal tie they find it convenient to emphasize; and that it is on account of the firm values of the structure that this flux does not cause confusion or bring about social disintegration. It would seem it may be partly just because the agnatic principle is unchallenged in Nuer society that the tracing of descent through women is so prominent and matrilocality so prevalent. However much the actual configurations of kinship clusters may vary and change, the lineage structure is invariable and stable.

CHAPTER II

MARRIAGE PROHIBITIONS AND INCEST

I

621 602 We noticed in the last chapter that local clusters of kin comprise persons of different clans and of different tribal origins and that, moreover, they are not fixed compositions. Their members, individuals and families, move often and freely, going to stay, seasonally or for many years, with different kinsmen in other villages and camps, generally, though not always, in the same tribal area. Wherever they go they are easily incorporated into the new community through one or more kinship links. Apart from such moves, Nuer frequently visit all the villages in their neighbourhood, and in all of them they have kinsfolk. I have demonstrated the network of kinship ties in selected local communities, but we have to think of all the different strands of relationship in each community passing outside it and across the bush to link its members to those of other communities. I am not speaking here of lineage ties, but of ties of kinship or personal relationship. Consequently the different local communities of a whole tribe could be presented on a single genealogical chart. Given unlimited time and patience, the entire population of Nuerland could be so presented. There are no closed communities. Villages and camps are spatially separated, but they merge into one another socially through a multitude of cross-strands of kinship between persons as well as forming parts of a single political structure.

602 582 This wide acknowledgement of kinship might be expected to be found together, as it is, with a wide range of marriage prohibitions, which have the effect of spreading the marriages of members of any local group and creating innumerable links through women between persons in many different communities. In view of what we have already learnt about the place of maternal and affinal ties in kinship configurations, we shall also not be surprised to discover that relationships of both kinds are covered by marriage prohibitions outside the rules of clan exogamy.

582 It is these marriage prohibitions I now propose to examine. I discuss the subject of incest at the same time because, although the

582 rules forbidding marriage within certain groups and between certain categories of persons are not coterminous with those forbidding sexual congress, the two cannot be divorced. The reason given by Nuer for their marriage prohibitions is that were marriage to take place within certain degrees of relationship it would be *rual*, incest.

835 684 753 The word *rual* means both incest and the misfortune which it causes. Syphilis and certain forms of yaws are believed to be especially a consequence of incest, though retribution may come in any form, from wild beasts, a spear, drowning, sickness, &c. These misfortunes can sometimes be avoided by sacrifice. On the other hand, they may fall not only on the partners to the sin but also on their closest relatives, so that a man who commits incest may render himself responsible for homicide as well.

582 When it is forbidden for a man to have relations with a woman he may not, of course, marry her, and it will be simpler to begin this account by stating the Nuer table of marriage prohibitions. Marriage is not permitted between clansfolk, close cognates, close natural kinsfolk, close kinsfolk by adoption, close affines, and persons who stand to one another as fathers and daughters in the age-set system.

A man may not marry a clanswoman and *a fortiori* a woman of his lineage. Agnatic kinship is recognized between some clans, but it does not constitute a bar to intermarriage. The relationship is considered to be very distant and, in any case, the ancestor of the fraternal clans is believed to have cut an ox in twain to permit intermarriage between the descendants of his sons. Nuer accept the hypothesis that maximal lineages of the larger clans might one day split apart and marriage be allowed between them, but 'at present they are too close'. They say '*cike diel*', 'they have not yet reached ten generations (from their founder)'. They perceive that the limits of clan exogamy have been fixed arbitrarily and are not unalterable.

582 614 Clan exogamy is stated by Nuer in terms of clan symbols. Each clan has one or more spear-names, with which go certain honorific titles, and the spear-names of the bride's clan and the bridegroom's clan are formally shouted out at weddings. They must not be exactly the same, for this would mean that the marriage was a breach of the rule of clan exogamy. When a marriage is proposed between a youth and maid whose families are strangers the first

inquiry made is into the spear-names of their clans. It sometimes happens that two unrelated clans have the same primary spear-names but have different secondary spear-names which serve to distinguish them ritually. It also sometimes happens that two maximal lineages of the same clan have different secondary spear-names, but in this case the secondary differentiation would not permit intermarriage. Nuer go into this matter very carefully if there is any doubt about clan relationship, as in certain circumstances there might be. 582 614

A man may not marry any close cognate. Nuer consider that if relationship can be traced between a man and a woman through either father or mother, however many female links there may be, up to six generations, though the number of generations is not absolutely fixed, marriage should not take place between them. An ox is believed to have been cut in two in ancient days to permit intermarriage between persons who are descended from a common ancestor beyond that point, so long as they are not agnates. Nuer explain that a man who is related to a woman as far back as six generations might still claim a small gift at her marriage, a clear indication that they cannot marry. If a proposed union is a borderline case a gourd may be ritually broken in half to end kinship. They then say '*bakena mar*', 'we split kinship', and '*ba bak ne kir*', 'it (kinship) is split with a gourd'. It should be noted, however, that a man cannot marry the daughter of a woman of his own maximal lineage even though the lines of himself and the mother converge at a point more than six generations back. Some clans permit marriage to the daughter of a woman of a collateral maximal lineage of the clan. Stated in a slightly different way, a man or woman may marry into his, or her, mother's clan but not into her maximal lineage. Other clans do not allow a man to marry into his mother's clan in any circumstances. 582

When, as often happens among the Nuer, the physiological father, the genitor, is a different man from the legal father, the pater, his sons will not marry into his minimal lineage because the physiological connexion is socially recognized by the payment to the natural father of a cow of the bridewealth of his natural daughters. They may, however, marry women of a collateral lineage. Close natural cognation of any kind is a bar to marriage. Thus I was told that a man would not marry the daughter of his *nar laka*, the natural son of his maternal grandfather.

582 727 563 The adoption of a Dinka boy into a Nuer minimal lineage prevents him from marrying into that lineage and he would normally not be allowed to marry into a collateral minimal lineage of the same minor lineage, though such marriages sometimes take place, as is evident in the genealogy of Yakwac cattle camp opposite page 19. Some of my informants were of the opinion that he ought not to marry into the clan at all. If he is permitted to do so, to avoid the appearance of a breach of exogamy, the spear-name *mut jangemo*, spear of this Dinka, is called out in the invocation of the ghosts on the day of his wedding in addition to the clan spear-name which became his by adoption. By this means the spear-names of the bride and bridegroom, which are the same, are distinguished. Also when, as it sometimes happens, a captured Dinka boy is not adopted into his captor's lineage, men of this lineage cannot marry his daughter because some of the cattle of her bridewealth are due to them, since the Dinka will have married with their cattle. The sons of the captor count as paternal uncles in the distribution of her bridewealth, and other members of the lineage may demand gifts from the bridegroom's people.

Captured Dinka girls are not adopted into Nuer lineages and their captors can marry them, though they rarely do so. If the captor of a girl intends to marry her or to let one of his sons marry her he passes a spear-shaft between her legs, and then hands her over to another man to bring up outside his village, 'because if she were to remain in his homestead she would become his daughter'. Generally a captured girl is brought up a member of her captor's household and is regarded as his daughter. He rubs ashes on the back of a sheep and tells his ancestral ghosts that the girl is 'our daughter and our sister'. Nuer say: 'Thus she is taken into the family (*gol*) and becomes a member of the family.' They also say: 'She will become our daughter and we will receive her bridewealth-cattle.' The cattle of her bridewealth give her kinship with the persons among whom it is distributed, as does also her right to receive in return the cows of the paternal aunt on the marriage of the daughters of the sons of her captor and foster-father. Marriage is therefore forbidden between her descendants and the descendants of these kinsmen in virtue of bridewealth for several generations. She herself can be married to a clansman of her foster-father so long as her husband does not belong to his minimal lineage, which is to say so long as those who pay her bridewealth cannot also

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claim part of it, for those who can claim part of a girl's bride- 727
wealth are kin to her. Nuer state these rules in terms of cattle. 563

A man may not take his wife's sister or any near kinswoman of 582
his wife as a second wife. A man may be on familiar terms with his 607
wife's sister, but sexual relations with her are incestuous and it is only permissible for him to marry her if his wife has died without having borne children. When I argued that there was no kinship between a man and his wife's sister, Nuer said that this was not true. 'What about the child?' they asked. They regard a man and his wife's sister as related through the child of the wife—for a woman is only fully married when she has a child and comes to live with her husband's people as their 'kinswoman', as they say, since her child is their child. Her sister is therefore also a kind of kinswoman, seeing that she is also the mother of their child. Your wife's sister being your child's maternal aunt is your sister (as we say, sister-in-law). Nuer also define this relationship in terms of cattle. When your daughter is married her mother's sister receives a cow of her bridewealth, and Nuer hold that she cannot both receive this cow and be your wife at the same time, especially as the cow is in some degree regarded as part of the bridewealth still owing from your marriage to your wife. Also, when your wife's sister's daughter marries, your wife will receive a cow and Nuer feel that there is something wrong about this cow coming to her if her sister is also her co-wife. In certain circumstances a woman may claim cattle on her sister's marriage, and in this case the man who pays the cattle would also be the receiver of them were a man to marry his wife's sister—a situation the Nuer regard as impossible. Hence Nuer say that a man may not marry his wife's sister either 'on account of her (the wife's) children' or 'on account of the cattle', which are different ways of saying that he cannot marry his child's maternal aunt. There is a further reason which would prevent a man from marrying his wife's sister while his wife is living, for, as will be explained later, a man may not have sexual relations with two closely related women at the same time. It follows that two brothers ought not to marry sisters or close cousins: 'That would be bad because if your brother died you could not take his wife.'

A man may not marry the daughter of an age-mate, a member 582
of his age-set, 'because she is his daughter'. The blood age-mates 561
have shed together into the ground at their initiation gives them a

582 kind of kinship. In certain circumstances an age-mate may claim
561 a cow, the *yang rica,* of the bridewealth of the daughter of one of
his mates and a man may not be in the position of paying bride-
[606] wealth and being able to claim it. Nuer point out also that were a man to marry the daughter of an age-mate her parents would become his parents-in-law, and the respect he would have to show them would be incompatible with the familiarity with which he should treat age-mates and their wives and the liberties he may take with them. He could not, for instance, eat and drink in their home, an abstention in glaring contradiction to the behaviour expected of age-mates. The prohibition on marriage with the daughter of an age-mate imposes no inconvenience on Nuer, for there would always be a great difference in age between the man and woman, and this is, in any case, an obstacle to marriage seldom surmounted in Nuerland. Strictly speaking, a breach of this prohibition is not *rual* but Nuer say that it is 'like *rual*'. The prohibition is said to have been ordained by God, and it is believed that the guardian spirit of the age-set will avenge a breach of it.

It is said that in the past a man would not have been allowed to marry the daughters of his father's age-mates, for they are in a sense his sisters. It is still not permissible for such a marriage to take place if both the fathers are alive, since this would mean that the two age-mates would enter into a relationship characterized by mutual reserve and in conflict with the egalitarian status of age-mates towards one another. When one of the fathers is dead marriage can take place, but in this case a cow, or more likely a sheep or goat, must be given by each family to the other. This exchange is in payment to the *ric,* the age-set, of the fathers to avoid evil consequences, the animal being called 'the cow of compensation (or atonement) of the age-set'. There is no clash between patterns of behaviour when one of the fathers is dead because the attitudes towards a member of a father's age-set and towards a father-in-law are both of respect.

582 The rules I have recorded above can be generalized by saying, as Nuer do, that a man may not marry a woman who is *mar*, kin, to him. In the rules prohibiting marriage, kinship is traced farther in some directions than in others and is of different kinds: the clan kinship of the common spear; the *buth* kinship of collateral lineage and of adoption; uterine kinship; kinship through the genitor; the kinship of cognation; kinship which the birth of a

child creates between affines; the kinship acknowledged by acceptance of bridewealth; and the kinship by analogy of the age-set. 582

It will be noted that the wide range of Nuer marriage prohibitions has a certain correspondence with the kinship configuration of their local communities described in the last chapter. The balance there observed between the paternal side and the maternal side in the notion of *mar*, kinship, and its reflection in residential attachments is seen again in the conventions governing marriage. The assimilation of affinal to kinship ties, noted as significant in the local network of relationships, is also a significant feature of these conventions. The rules taken as a whole amount to this: a man must not marry kin (including affines), and as he is born and brought up in a circle of kin which normally embraces the people of his immediate neighbourhood, he is generally compelled to marry outside it. He is also compelled to look for sweethearts outside it; and I think that this is one reason why Nuer youths like to stay in the villages and camps of maternal and affinal relatives where they have greater freedom in sexual matters.

Nevertheless, however extensive the prohibitions may be, there must always be a point in each category of them at which a marriage can just be allowed or is just disallowed. In these borderline cases there is some latitude in interpretation of the prohibitions. Cases arise in which there is disagreement whether the genealogical distance between a suitor and the girl whom he wishes to marry is wide enough to permit marriage. It sometimes happens also that a girl's family raise an objection on the score of relationship that they would not have raised had they been better disposed towards the marriage. Indeed, this is a common way of telling a suitor politely that his suit is unwelcome—even when, in fact, there is no relationship which could be seriously urged against the union. It also happens that a distant relationship, which might have been adduced as a bar to marriage, is passed over by a girl's family if they consider the suitor a desirable son-in-law. I have been present at marriage negotiations when a kinsman, who was not satisfied with his share of the bridewealth, raised the objection of kinship, and later, when satisfied, waived it; and at another marriage when one kinsman of the bride urged that the union would be incestuous, while the other kinsmen held that it would not be so. When marriage is permitted in borderline cases of this kind a beast will generally be sacrificed to cut what 584

584 kinship there may be held still to be between the partners to the union. This is done because it is feared that otherwise the marriage may not be fruitful.

In doubtful cases it may be taken into consideration that some of the links between the pair are those of adoption or of ghost-parentage and not of consanguinity. Also, if there is some doubt about the correctness of a union it is sometimes held to be less questionable if the bride and bridegroom do not belong to the same local community.

Exceptions to the general principles governing marriage prohibitions do not invalidate them, for the rules are acknowledged even in the breach of them. Thus I have known of a peculiar marriage into the clan in which, on the day of the wedding, tribute was paid to the prohibition on intra-clan marriage by omitting the traditional calling out of the spear-names of bride and bridegroom at the invocation of the ghosts.*

The prohibitions of marriage I have related apply also to concubinary unions. The *concubinus* and *concubina* ought not to be related in any of the ways I have mentioned, though here there seems to be greater laxity than in matrimonial unions. Concubinage is entered into on the initiative of the partners to the union and without the public discussion matrimony entails, so that distant, but nevertheless valid, kinship may escape notice. My reason for believing that this is so is that I came across several cases where the death of the children born in concubinage led to a fuller investigation which revealed relationship, of which the partners were ignorant, and consequently to the dissolution of their partnership.

II

835 It is not incestuous for a man to have relations with daughters of men of his father's age-set and he would not hesitate to make love to them. In all other cases where it is forbidden for a man to marry a woman standing in a certain relationship to him it is also

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* The husband was the son of a man of the Gaatnaca clan but had been begotten in ghost-marriage by his pater's sister's son, a man of the Gaatgankir clan. The wife's pater was a woman of the Gaatnaca clan (of a different lineage). She had married a wife to raise up children to herself by an unrelated man. The marriage could not have taken place had the wife's pater been a man. As it was, it was subjected to criticism. The reader will understand these peculiar circumstances better after he has read Chapter III.

forbidden to him to be intimate with her, though the prohibition has not always the same force or extension. Before discussing the different degrees of seriousness with which Nuer view breaches of the various rules, I will mention the other relationships which carry the incest taboo besides those, already recorded, which exclude marriage either absolutely or contingently.

Nuer consider it to be *rual* for a man to have relations with wives of any close living kinsmen, except, as is explained later, wives of some paternal kinsmen. The worst incest of this kind is with wives of the father, uterine brother, son, and maternal uncle. It is considered almost as bad as relations with the sister and entails the same consequences. Relations with the mother's co-wife (father's wife) are thought to be shocking because the father has relations with her and afterwards with the mother carrying the son's contact with the co-wife to the mother. It is also *rual* to have relations with wives of the sons of the maternal uncle and of the paternal and maternal aunts. Relations with wives of affines, such as a second wife of the sister's husband, are also regarded as incestuous. It is only congress with wives of the paternal uncles, paternal half-brothers, and paternal cousins which are spoken of without opprobrium. The worst that is said about congress with wives of these kinsmen is that it is a *rual ma tot*, a slight incest, which will not injure the partners to it. It might harm the women's babies, but it is thought that even this penalty can be avoided easily and without expense by cutting in twain, in the place of an animal sacrifice, a *kwol*, a wild yellow tomato-like fruit found in abundance near habitations. It is only if the paternal uncle is the father's uterine brother or if his family form a common household with that of the father that relations with his wife are regarded in a more serious light. They may bring on the offenders serious misfortunes.

The uterine brother is a brother *kwi man*, on the mother's side, and the thought of relations with his wife evokes the disgust Nuer feel at any association of sex with the mother. They regard relations with wives of relatives of the mother's side with distaste 'because of the mother'. The uterine paternal uncle partakes, in a lesser degree, of the same maternal associations because he is a son of the father's mother. But the paternal half-uncles, the paternal half-brothers, and the paternal cousins are 'bulls', and '*Tut thilke rual*', 'There is no incest among bulls'. If they live in different

835 villages from that of the adulterer some compensation in cattle might be exacted, but if they live in the same village it will not be asked for: 'There would be no compensation, for they are of the same community (*cieng*).' Nuer say, however, that adultery with the wife of a paternal half-uncle is wrong 'because of the father', which means because the half-uncle should be treated with the respect due to the father. To have relations with his wife is not incestuous but shows lack of deference. Relations with the wives of paternal half-brothers and paternal cousins are not subject to the same restraint. It is not *rual* to have relations with the wife of an age-mate, but it is regarded as a grave breach of confidence, for a man will trust his wife to the honour of an age-mate, and it is believed that the guardian spirit of the age-set will punish the offender.

It is forbidden on incestuous grounds to have relations with wives of kinsmen, other than those mentioned, only during their lifetime, when they are themselves cohabiting with their wives. It is permissible, indeed to some extent obligatory, to take the places of the husbands in leviratic marriage. It is usual for a widow to cohabit with her dead husband's brother. Rarely a son takes her, and occasionally a sister's son. If a man thus cohabits with his father's, brother's, or maternal uncle's widow he first breaks off the physical relationship between the widow and her late spouse by sacrificing a sheep. Nuer say: 'He divides them with a sheep.' 'The father (or brother, or maternal uncle) is removed', as they say, not so much, if at all, because there would be any danger of *rual*, but in order to be rid of any evil the dead man might have had in his heart towards the man who is taking his wife which might injure her or her children. If a living father or brother gives up a wife to his son or brother, as occasionally happens, a similar sacrifice has to be made, but here the notion of *rual* is more pronounced.

The prohibition on a man having relations with a kinsman's wife is part of a more general regulation which forbids, as *rual*, two close kinsmen to have relations with the same woman, though, here again, 'bulls' do not come, altogether or to some extent, under the ban. Likewise, two closely related women must not have relations with the same man. Nuer youths are careful to inquire of a girl, if they are uncertain of her affairs, whether she has a sweetheart among their close kinsmen. A man may, however, start an

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affair with a girl as soon as a kinsman has broken off relations with her. This rule, which refers to courtship and sweethearts rather than to casual intercourse, applies to father and son, uterine brothers, and to a lesser degree paternal half-brothers, and also in some degree to cousins, except to paternal parallel cousins, for they are 'bulls' and it does not matter if they share sweethearts. The prohibition is, however, only forcibly enunciated with regard to kinsfolk who are also members of the same village. Hence it is said that it is not very dangerous for a man and his mother's brother's son to make love to the same girl if they are not members of the same local community. The most dangerous incest of this kind, the consequences of which 'split a man in two' with pain, is when father and son have relations with the same woman, for the father goes from the woman to the mother, thus bringing her into a sexual relationship with her son. It is also highly dangerous for a mother and daughter to have relations with the same man. In one village where I was living at the time relations of this kind were believed to have caused the death not only of the daughter but of her sister and half-sister as well. I knew of another case in which two sisters died after the same man had had relations with both of them. The man died shortly afterwards, and it was said that he had been summoned by the ghosts of the sisters.

There are, as we have seen, a very large number of relationships which carry the incest taboo and it is not surprising that there are frequent breaches of it. Indeed, Nuer discuss incest, except incest with the closest kin, without expressing horror or repugnance. It is a fact with which they are familiar and a subject on the surface of life, not a secret thing to be talked of with embarrassment. Parents teach sons at an early age the rules of sex: to avoid the wives of others and women who are kin. Not only must they refrain from making love to women who count as kin but they must avoid any licentious talk, to which the Nuer are much given, in their presence. The *nei ti gwagh*, the unrelated people, they can joke with and make love to without fear of censure or retribution, so long as they are not wives of other men, for fornication with an unrelated girl is not regarded with disapprobation. The admonition of parents is enforced by the frequent discussions children hear about the permissibility of proposed marriages and by the sacrifices on account of incest they are bound to witness from time to time.

MARRIAGE PROHIBITIONS AND INCEST

835 The incest taboo is not uniform in its force nor in the consequences its breach is believed to entail. Some incest is very bad and has very serious consequences. Other incest is not so bad, is even thought little of, and is not expected to bring about serious, or even any, consequences. The worst incest of all would be with the mother, and Nuer were astonished when I asked them if they had known of any cases of it: 'But that would be immediate death.' Incest with the uterine sister or the daughter is also terrible. I have heard of one case of each. Incest with the paternal half-sister, whether daughter of pater or genitor, is bad but, so Nuer told me, occasionally occurs. Incest with cousins is not so bad and with paternal cousins not uncommon, 'for one man knows kinship and another man does not know kinship, that is a man whose heart was made differently'. Generally speaking, the farther the man and woman are from one another genealogically the less seriously incest between them is regarded, especially if they live in different districts, and the taboo is less stringent and has a narrower range for natural kinsmen than for legal kinsmen. I was told, for instance, that a man might make love to the daughter of a natural son of his maternal grandfather (*nya nar laka*). Incest with kinswomen on the paternal side is not thought so bad as incest with kinswomen on the maternal side. It is worse with the uterine sister than with the paternal half-sister, and it is worse with a mother's brother's daughter than with a father's brother's daughter, and with a mother's sister's daughter than with a father's sister's daughter. In all categories of incest it is considered much worse with a near kinswoman than a distant one. Relations with distant clanswomen and cognates are of frequent occurrence. They are with persons who are on the frontiers of prohibition and carry no moral stigma or much fear of consequences. Nuer, in the usual idiom of their culture, often condemn incest with kinsfolk by reference to bridewealth: 'Would you have relations with the daughter of your father's sister? Do you not receive cattle on her marriage?' Condemnation in such terms would not be applicable to distant kinsfolk.

Incest with wives of kinsmen also occurs, though I have little means of judging its frequency. I recorded two cases of incest with wives of maternal uncles. In the one the offender died of *rual*, while in the other the uncle, who was a rich man with several wives, sacrificed an ox and afterwards relinquished the wife in

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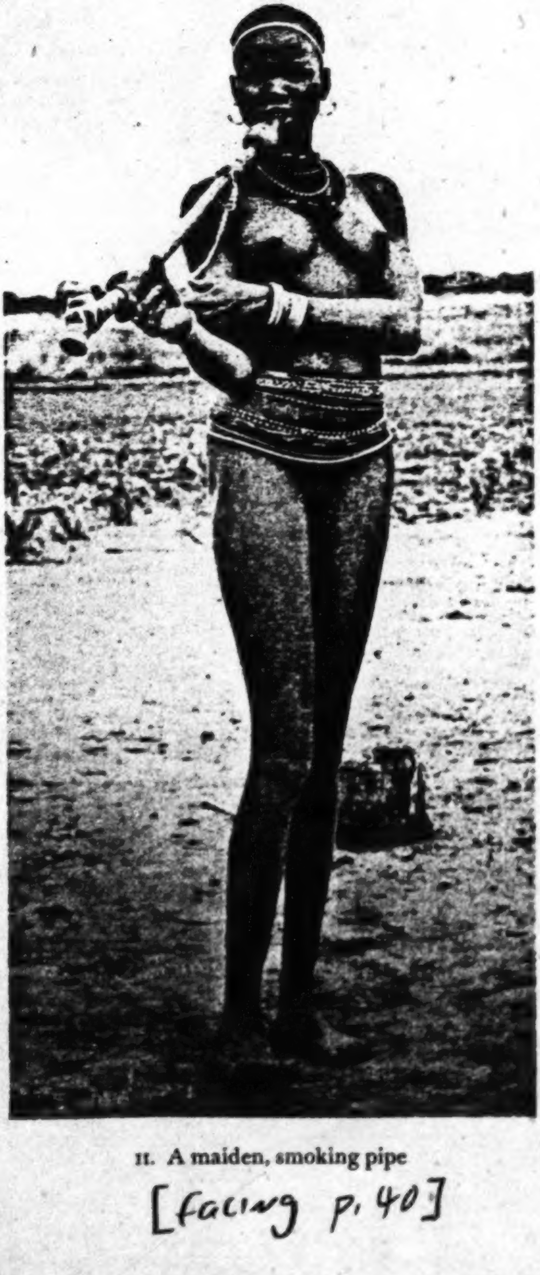

11. A maiden, smoking pipe

[facing p. 40]

835 favour of his sister's son: 'It was like making a gift to his sister's son.' I have also recorded cases of incest with another wife of the sister's husband. These cases come to light because the man or woman falls violently sick and to avoid death confesses what he or she has done and asks for an animal to be sacrificed in atonement. Intimacy with wives of paternal cousins and of other clansmen is undoubtedly common. As with incest with kinswomen, incest with wives of kinsmen is regarded in a more or less serious light according to the kinship distance separating the two men; likewise with relations between a woman and two kinsmen or between a man and two kinswomen. Thus in a village in Lou country where I was living it was common knowledge that a man called Lum was having an affair with a woman who was described to me as his wife's sister, and when I expressed astonishment that he should dare to continue it, I was told: 'It may be all right, she is only his wife's *nyagwanlen* (father's brother's daughter).' It remained to be seen whether there would be consequences or not. I was also told that even had the girl been his wife's *nyagwan* (paternal half-sister) nothing might happen, though the relations would without doubt be *rual*, and that the consequences would only be both certain and disastrous had she been his wife's *nyiman pany*, her true (uterine) sister.

Incest with the wife of a kinsman is also, of course, adultery, but if it is with the wife of a close kinsman who does not in this context count as a 'bull' the response is likely to emphasize the incest rather than the adultery. The husband, although he is the innocent party, may suffer harm, and if the incest comes to light he is anxious rather to have a sacrifice performed than to exact compensation. However, relations with wives of kinsmen seem generally to be with the wives of 'bulls', a man's paternal kin, who live in his village, and, as I have explained, they are not regarded as incestuous—neither are cattle demanded in compensation. Apart from the fact that their wives are all wives of the lineage, it is not thought proper that cattle should go from one kraal to another in payment for adultery among people who herd their cattle together and assist one another in debts. Thus, if a man commits adultery with his father's brother's wife he is not likely to be asked to pay more than 'the cow of the hide'. This animal, which is paid in addition to any cattle which may be paid in compensation for the wrong in any case of adultery, whether with the wife of a kinsman

835 or with the wife of a stranger, is for sacrifice to prevent injury to the husband. It is not regarded as compensation for infringement of his rights.

More distant kinsmen are likely to insist on compensation. Relations with their wives are not thought to entail serious consequences on account of their incestuous nature, and there is less reason for the husband viewing the adultery with tolerance. Sometimes a kinsman accepts smaller compensation than an unrelated man would do. For example, in a case which came to my notice, a man had relations with the wife of the son of his maternal uncle's mother's sister. He paid three head of cattle in compensation, instead of the six head which might have been demanded, and he provided a goat for sacrifice. In all such cases, however, the outcome depends on the personal relations between the men concerned, and this generally means whether they are neighbours.

To avoid the consequences of incest Nuer make sacrifices, and the weight they attach to the breach of the taboo may be estimated by the value of the thing they sacrifice. For slight incest, as with a distant clanswoman or the wife of a paternal cousin, they consider it sufficient to sacrifice one of the yellow fruits I have spoken of earlier or one of the pendulous fruits of the sausage-tree. When a fruit is sacrificed it is cut in two and the left half, 'the bad half', is thrown away, while an infusion of the contents of the right half, 'the good half', is drunk by the partners to the sin. They may get a magician to make the sacrifice for them or they may make it for themselves. When incest has taken place with the wife of a kinsman who is not a 'bull' and is in Nuer reckoning a close kinsman, the wife's sleeping-skin is cut in two. This, of course, would only be done if one of the pair was sick enough to be more frightened of death than of the husband, for unlike the cutting of the fruits the rite cannot be performed secretly. In cases of incest with a close kinswoman and in all cases of what Nuer regard as really bad incest, *wal ruali*, an antidote some people are said to possess and make use of when committing a slight incest, is no protection and a vicarious sacrifice no remedy. A goat or a sheep, or in the most serious cases an ox, must be cut vertically in twain and a leopard-skin chief must perform the sacrifice. The guilty persons drink incest medicines infused in the gall of the sacrificed animal. It is believed that retribution follows swiftly on the heels of the offence, so that if sacrifice is to be of any avail it must be performed at once. Nuer say that a sacrifice is unlikely to be efficacious when death is near and that it is little profit to make confession then.

The presence of children increases the danger. It is not thought that relations with a distant patrilineal cousin or with the wife of a father's brother in the classificatory sense will harm those who engage in them, but if the woman has children Nuer say: 'It (the *rual*) may leave you alone, but it will kill the children.' In the same way I was told in reference to the case, already cited, of Lum, who was having relations with his wife and his wife's paternal cousin at the same time: 'But she (the wife) has no child, so it is not *rual*.' If she had had a child the paternal cousin would have been the child's mother. In another case a man called Buk was having relations with a concubine in a neighbouring hamlet although his son, Bul, was married to the daughter of this concubine by another man. It was stressed by informants that Buk had not begotten a child by the concubine, for had he done so the child would have been *gat gwan*, father's son, to Bul, whose marriage, which had in any case not escaped critical comment, might then have entailed risks. In Jikany country I recorded the following case. A man died and his widow went to live with his brother. A third brother died and there was talk of the living brother taking his widow also; but he did not do so on the objection being raised that both widows belonged to the same clan and that he had already begotten a child by the first one. In another case, also in Jikany country, a man of the Gaajak tribal area begat a child by his brother's widow, a Gaatgankir clanswoman of the Gaajok tribal area. When he came to live in the Gaajok tribal area he began affairs with two girls, but gave them up when he found that they belonged to the widow's clan, lest relations with them might injure his child. A man cannot take as a concubine a woman who has borne a child in concubinage to one of his close kinsmen.

III

I now make some general observations on Nuer exogamous and other marriage prohibitions and incest, or about the Nuer concept of *rual*. Nuer say that marriage to persons standing in certain relationships is forbidden because it would be *rual*, incestuous. Speaking sociologically, I think we may reverse this statement and

835 say that sexual relations with persons standing in these relationships are considered incestuous because it would be a breach of the marriage prohibitions to marry them. I would hold that the incest taboo can only be understood by reference to the marriage prohibitions, and that these prohibitions must be viewed in the light of their function in the Nuer kinship system and in their whole social structure.

It is evident that the incest prohibition is derived from a social definition of kinship. There is no consanguinity between a man and his wife's sister, between an adopted Dinka boy and the daughter of his foster-father's brother, and between a man and the daughter of one of his age-mates. The Nuer incest prohibition is a prohibition of sexual relations within relationships of certain kinds, and I suggest that its range of extension may be related to the marriage prohibitions of their society for which it provides a moral norm, a reason, and a sanction.

It is true that extra-marital relations between clansfolk who do not belong to the same lineage do not occasion great concern, but I do not think that this invalidates the contention, for though they take place they are none the less *rual* and the toleration of the breach of the taboo merely means, as it does in other cases in which a breach is tolerated, that the nearer we get to the point at which marriage is permitted the less stringent becomes the prohibition of sexual relations. It must also be remembered that agnation is recognized beyond the clan and between clans, and that the Nuer themselves recognize that the limits of exogamy are fixed arbitrarily. That sexual relations with distant clanswomen are little condemned shows that we are dealing with a prohibition the strength of which is relative to the structural positions of the persons concerned, just as is the force of customary law, and that the prohibition of marriage is more fundamental and comprehensive than the prohibition of sex relations, which is secondary and, I would hold, derivative. That it is the table of prohibited degrees and not the incest taboo which is basic is further illustrated by the prohibition, at the present day a qualified prohibition, on marriage with the daughter of a father's age-mate, for sexual relations between men and women standing in this relationship to one another are entirely free from any stigma and if either father is dead marriage may take place.

It is also true that Nuer call *rual* relations with women married

835

to kinsmen. These women cannot be counted as possible mates to whom any marriage prohibitions could apply. But it must be pointed out that Nuer bring wives of kinsmen within the field of kinship values, not only in that they address them by kinship terms, but also, and more significantly, by reference to their children, for according to Nuer ideas marriage is only a complete union when a child has been born of it. Mothers through their children become kinsfolk and are thus brought within the circuit of the incest taboo not so much as wives of kinsmen but rather as mothers of kinsmen.

In view of the importance attached to children by Nuer in determining what is incest, or the degree of it, it may readily be understood why sexual relations with the wives of half-brothers, paternal uncles, and patrilineal cousins of every degree are regarded as being either incestuous peccadillos or not incestuous at all. The wife of a 'bull' is, in a general social sense, the wife of all the 'bulls', of the paternal kin, and of the lineage. She is 'our wife' and 'the wife of our cattle'. Likewise her children are the children of the lineage, of the agnatic group, and of its cattle. Hence sexual relations with wives of these agnates, if not approved, are condoned, for they are the wives of all. Hence, also, whereas relations with, for example, the wife of the maternal uncle means relations with the *cek nara*, the maternal uncle's wife, and the mother of *gat nara*, the maternal uncle's child, relations with the wife of the father's brother's son are with '*cekdan*', 'our wife', and the mother of '*gatdan*', 'our child'. The presence of a child does not alter the status of the persons concerned in the second case as it does in the first, for the wife is the wife of the lineage and the child is the child of the adulterer. When a man dies, therefore, there is no question of the widow being remarried to one of his brothers, for the brothers already count as her husbands. The dead man's lineage have a right to inherit his wife because she is their wife, the wife of their cattle.

I think that we should try to interpret in much the same way the feeling that it is wrong for two kinsmen to court the same girl, unless they are members of the same lineage. Paternal kin can share the same girl because they have a lineage identity, whereas the courting of the same girl by, for example, a man and his maternal aunt's son makes for confusion within the kinship system. The position of the uterine brother is peculiar because full

835 brothers are not just 'bulls' to one another, members of the same lineage. They are maternal kinsmen as well as paternal kinsmen, and in their case sexual relations with each other's sweethearts seem to the Nuer to involve in some way the mother, an idea which is repugnant to them.

These interpretations may be unacceptable to the reader. If so, he can disregard them without rejecting the main conclusion from which they are inferred. It is clear that the marriage prohibitions indicate kinship status and are one of the most effective means of doing this and thereby maintaining the kinship system, which is based on the distinctions between the various categories of relationships. They prevent confusion between one relationship and another and the contradictions such confusion would cause between the patterns of behaviour in which the relationships are expressed. This conclusion is contained in the statements, some of them recorded in this chapter, of Nuer themselves, who see that it is undesirable to obliterate or obscure the boundaries between kinship categories. Were marriage with the wife's sister permitted, to the child of it the mother's sister would also be the father's wife; and were a man to marry the daughter of an age-mate, his age-mate would also be his father-in-law.

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613 The bearing these regulations have on the kinship system will be seen in later chapters. I discussed their bearing on political structure and their relation to the lineage system in a few pages (pp. 225–8) in *The Nuer*. The argument there presented may be restated in a few sentences. Nuer political structure is a system of relations between territorial groups which express both their autonomy and their participation in the system in terms of lineage and clan affiliations. The local groups are organized into a common tribal structure through the association of clans with tribes, and the various lineages of these dominant clans in each tribe with the various sections and sub-sections of the tribe. Political structure is thus conceptualized in lineage structure. To play this part lineages must be both unique groups and at the same time must be identified with the local communities within which they function politically. Were they to lose entirely their uniqueness as descent groups the lineage structure in which the local communities see themselves as parts of a tribal organization would collapse. Were they not to merge in the network of kinship relations of which each local community is composed they would lack that cor-

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931,1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

porateness which identification with residential groups gives them, and be an abstraction, since they are not corporate groups in their own right. A man acts sometimes as a lineage member, cutting himself off from the community of which he is part, but in ordinary social life he acts as a member of this community without reference to his exclusive lineage affiliation. In some situations values of descent determine his conduct, but in most situations it is determined by kinship values or by those community values which are an expression on a political plane of a sentiment created by corporate life comprised within a network of personal relations of a kinship order. This separation of the lineage from community life and its merging into it again is very largely brought about by the rules of exogamy which exclude marriage within the clan, thus giving that group distinctness, while compelling its lineages, by marrying outside the clan, to become multiple links in the network of kinship relations the strands of which form the texture of community life. Every Nuer local community thus becomes a community of kin, every member of which regulates his behaviour to every other member in accordance with a variety of kinship patterns and can predict their behaviour to himself in conformity with the same norms. 621 613

When a local community becomes in this way a network of kinship ties it is necessary, so varied and extensive are the relationships which come under the ban on marriage, to marry outside it, so that not only is the social autonomy of lineage groups prevented by the rules regulating marriage but also the social autonomy of residential groups. Kinship ties thus cross the gaps in political structure and unite members of opposed segments of it. Every political group of whatever size has a wider social setting outside its boundaries.

There is a tendency therefore for local communities to be groups of people who, being all interrelated in one way or another, must marry into a different local community. This happens because the Nuer make any kind of cognatic relationship to several degrees a bar to marriage and, at least so it seems to me, it is a bar to marriage because of the fundamental agnatic principle running through Nuer society. In any Nuer residential group, of whatever size, there is, as we have seen, a great variety of personal ties of a kinship order bringing its members into a texture of relationships, but the warp of the texture is the agnatic lineage

621 613 and to it everyone attaches himself locally. If a man is not a member of the lineage with which he lives, he makes himself a member of it by treating a maternal link as though it was a paternal one or through affinal relationship. The lineage is thus in its corporate character a composite structure of cognatic branches and attachments in which the value of agnation is the integrating principle. The solidarity of a group of persons living together, and thereby the lineage structure which contains them, is maintained by emphasizing cognation in the rules of exogamy.

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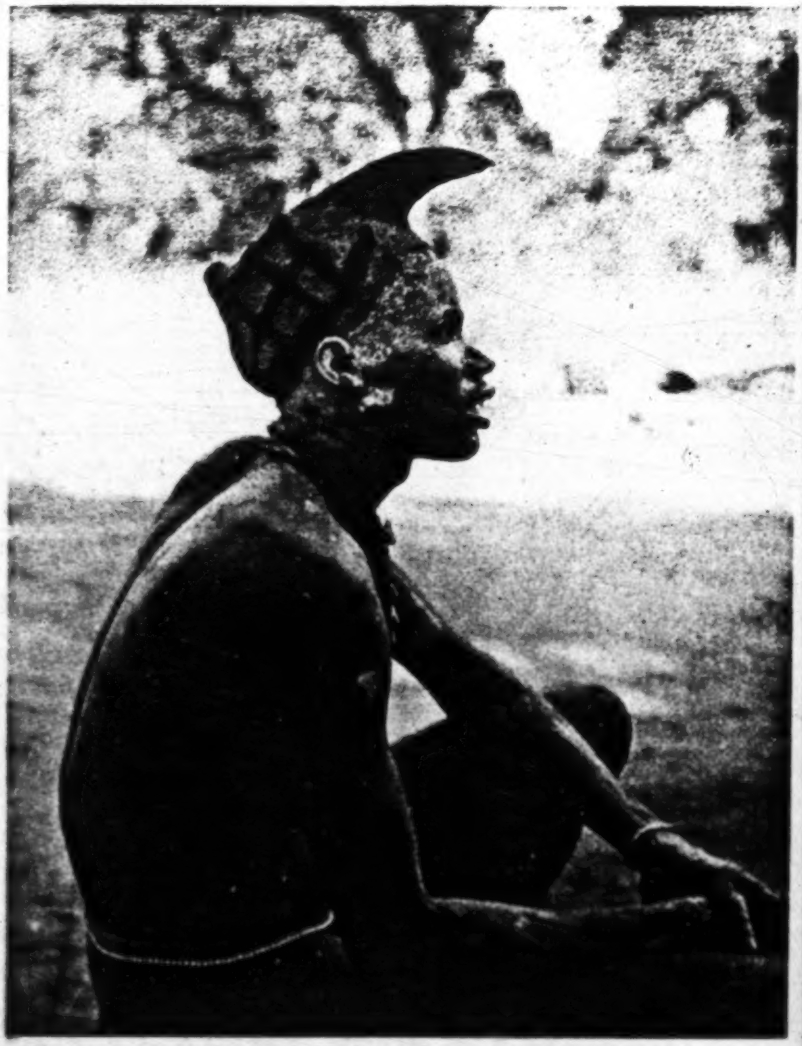

III. A youth. His hair is dressed with ashes

[facing p. 48]

CHAPTER III

MARRIAGE

I

/121/ I HAVE suggested in the last chapter[1] that the range of the Nuer incest taboo can be understood only in relation to their rules prohibiting marriage between kin. These in their turn are only intelligible when viewed as part of the kinship system to which they belong, and that kinship system derives its particular form from its function in the political structure of the Nuer.

Kinship is a general word for describing any relationship of one individual to another through his father or mother. All kinship ties thus derive from the family, that universal and fundamental social group which everywhere and in some way or another incorporates the institution of marriage. It is therefore partly for logical reasons that I describe first how matrimonial unions are brought about among the Nuer and discuss the kinship relations which derive from them later. I describe marriage and kinship in this order also partly for convenience, in that kinship among the Nuer is so largely defined by reference to bridewealth.

I describe in this first section relations between the sexes before marriage, and in the following sections the chief ceremonies by which marriage is brought about, the payments of bridewealth which together with the ceremonies create valid and durable unions, the affinal relations which arise from the unions, and the various forms of domestic union we find among the Nuer side by side with matrimony in the full legal sense.

581/ 831/ Sexual activities are from their earliest manifestations given the stamp of cultural values. They are from the first associated with marriage, which is the final goal of the sex life of men and women. Even the very poor and the disabled form domestic establishments of some kind and talk proudly of 'my father-in-law' and 'my mother-in-law'. It is the chief ambition of a youth to marry and have a home (*gol*) of his own, for when Nuer speak of marriage they speak of a home. They say of a youth: 'He is married—he has *a gol*.' Even in childhood it is clear to Nuer that marriage and the birth of children are the ultimate purpose of the sexual functions

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[1] [chapter II -- Analyst]

581 831 to which all earlier activities of a sexual kind—play, love-making, and courtship—are a prelude, a preparation, and a means.

831 So long as there is no erotic behaviour in public, no inhibitions attach to sexual interests and their expression, and no one tries to hide from children the facts of sexual life, which they can learn by observing their elders and the flocks and herds among which childhood is spent. A boy who is seen by his elders in sexual play with a girl of his own age will merely be told not to act as though he had been initiated—he can do what he likes then—and at the most might receive a cut with a grass switch. No one considers his conduct immoral, and the older people will joke about such things among themselves.

857 581 831 Children start playing at marriage from the time they begin to walk, at first as uncomprehending observers of the games of older children and then as participants in them. They make cattle byres and huts of sand, and mud oxen and cows, and with these conduct bridewealth negotiations and perform marriage ceremonies, and they play at domestic and conjugal life, including sometimes in the game, I was told, imitation of coitus. In its earliest expression, therefore, sex is associated with marriage, and the first sexual play occurs in imitation of one of the domestic routines of married life. It occurs in response to a cultural, and not to an instinctive, urge.

Girls and boys, the girls rather earlier than the boys, begin to perform the simpler and lighter tasks of household and kraal from about the age of seven. From then onwards till they are about fourteen, marriage games continue when the children are by themselves, and though within them sexual play begins to be indulged in for its own sake and not merely in imitation of adult behaviour, it is subordinate to the whole make-believe relationship of conjugality of which it forms a part. During the rainy months the girls visit the boys in the grazing grounds, bringing them balls of porridge as presents, which each gives to the boy she has chosen as her 'husband'. She also milks the goats for her 'husband' and may even bring him a gourdful of cow's milk from the kraal. The boys cut millet stalks in the gardens and after roasting and eating the immature grain send the sweet stalks with their outer husks removed to their 'brides'. Older boys also send their juniors with mud oxen and cows to one of the senior girls, who plays the part of mother-in-law. I was told that in these games sexual intercourse may take place, but is neither a usual nor a prominent feature.

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Girls witness serious love-making and courtship earlier than boys. At dances small girls follow their more experienced sisters and cousins, imitating their movements during the dancing and afterwards sitting with them while the young men pay them compliments and try to persuade them to retire with them into the long grass. When a girl is about twelve or thirteen initiated boys begin to court her, and when she is about fifteen or sixteen she has at least one lover and probably one in each of the villages neighbouring her own. She passes through a succession of love affairs, besides more casual affairs. I doubt whether any girl in Nuerland goes to her husband a virgin. 833 881

As a rule boys are initiated from about fourteen to sixteen. Unlike the girls, whose social life develops slowly from childhood to marriage without any sudden change of status, the boys jump at initiation from the grade of boyhood to the grade of manhood, and the character of their social life is correspondingly transformed; though even before initiation boys make some adjustments in their way of life in anticipation of the status they will acquire when they have passed through the rites. In particular, they abstain from eating in the presence of unrelated girls. A small boy eats with his mother and sisters, but when he is about six he eats with the other boys of the household when the womenfolk have guests, lest they might feel embarrassed at the presence of a lad, though only a small one, and, bit by bit, he gets into the habit of eating with them regularly. 881

After initiation a lad takes on the full privileges and obligations of manhood in work, play, and war. Above all, he gives himself whole-heartedly to winning the favours of the maidens of his neighbourhood. Courtship now rivals devotion to cattle as his major interest. In speaking of a recently initiated lad Nuer often say: 'And now he has become a man and will court the girls.' He takes every opportunity for flirtation which offers itself. His chances are chiefly at dances, and Nuer youths, for this reason, attend as many wedding dances and other drum-dances as they can in their district during the rains and the harp-dances at neighbouring camps in the dry season. In speaking of these dances young men speak always of the girls they will meet at them, of how the girls will admire their finery and their excellent dancing and display of spearmanship and duelling with the club, and they add: 'And then of course we will spend the night in courting.' 883

883 That Nuer do not attend dances chiefly for the dancing is shown by their lack of interest in organizing harp-dances in dry-season camps when it is unlikely that unrelated girls from other camps will be able to attend them. 'Who wants to dance with his sisters?' they ask. But when there is a chance of love-making Nuer youths, who appear so slothful and lethargic to the foreign traveller, think nothing of walking and running ten to fifteen miles to attend a dance.

When a dance breaks up, about nine o'clock at night, the youths seize the girls by their wrists and lead them apart. They then either walk about the dancing-ground in pairs and small groups, the youths and maidens hand-in-hand or with their arms round each other's waists, or they sit in small parties at the grass-fringed edge of the dancing-ground. They sit wedged together and exchange endearments. Nuer girls are attractive companions at any time and are enchanting when decked with flowers and ornaments and anointed with oil for dancing, and the young men are charming and indefatigable flatterers. Wooing in Nuerland is an arduous business. A youth must be profuse and tireless in pouring out compliments to the girl whose favour he solicits, and he often sits opposite her with a stick in his hand to make lines on the ground to mark each new compliment.

When these parties break up the youths and maidens pair and continue flirting *tête-a-tête* in the grasses in privacy. It rests entirely with a girl whom she goes with. She has her lovers who meet her whenever they can, at dances, at her father's home, and at trysting-places, and she will probably go with one of these. When several young men want to go with her they tell her to make her choice from them, for all those who have been sitting together with the girl belong to one *dep*, the fighting line of a village, and are therefore all kin who will not quarrel about a girl. A lover from a different village would not try to break into the circle once it has been formed. She makes her choice—if she already has a lover in the *dep* she will choose him—and the other youths move away. Apart from her established lovers, a girl has no difficulty in knowing if a man is particularly attracted to her by the way he dances and conducts his spear-thrusting and club-duelling exercises during the dancing. If she likes him also she can probably so arrange matters that he is able to seize her wrist when the dance is beginning to break up.

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883 856 Intercourse does not necessarily take place when a youth and maid are alone together on the night of a dance. When the relationship between them is a *luom buol,* a dance love affair, or *luom thura,* a dancing-ground love affair, a more or less constant attachment, and not a *luom goka,* a love affair of the high grasses, casual lust, I was told that the girl is likely to refuse her favours, though he will entreat for them, unless she feels sure that he intends to marry her and has the cattle with which to do so, for no respectable girl wants to be a *keagh,* an unmarried mother. No attempt is made to conceal an attachment of this kind, which indeed imposes on the girl modesty and shyness towards her lover in the presence of other persons such as a bride is expected to show towards her bridegroom or a newly-wed towards her husband.

Parents are not cognizant of all the love affairs of their children, but if a girl forms a constant attachment she may tell her mother about it, and a father will probably hear of a similar attachment of his son. They are not likely to say anything unless there is danger of incest. All the young men of a hamlet or small village, who are kinsmen and dance together, know of one another's courtships and escapades. Likewise, all the girls know about one another's lovers and amours, for they also keep together at dances. The only person who may interfere is a brother in an affair of his [593] sister, for her virtue is his responsibility, but he will only do so in certain circumstances. He keeps an eye on his sister and knows who is courting her, but he will only come between her and her lover if he suspects that she is having regular relations with a man without cattle or that she is giving herself to all and sundry.

848 It not infrequently happens that a girl becomes pregnant while still unmarried. If the young man has cattle he will be expected to marry her, and if she is not a profligate he will be glad to do so. If he has insufficient cattle he cannot do so, and though another man will not object to taking her as a wife, he is more likely to take her as a second wife than as a first wife, and he will pay fewer cattle for her bridewealth. It is therefore in the brother's interest to see that this does not happen. It is also in his interest to prevent his sister from becoming a wanton. A man does not expect his bride to be a virgin, but he does not care to marry a jade. A girl of easy virtue may find plenty of lovers but no suitors, and after bearing an illegitimate child is likely to become a concubine for the rest of her life, to the detriment of her family herd.

836 883 Therefore, if a youth takes a girl away from a dance to his *dep* and sits with her among his friends and other girls until he finds an opportunity to get her to himself he will not be molested, because her brother has seen her leave the dance in company, and by the time she is intimate with her lover he will be doing the same himself. But if a man is indiscreet enough to take her off by herself as soon as the dance is breaking up he is asking for trouble, though the brother may not say anything if the youth is a friend of his whom he knows to have cattle and serious intentions towards his sister. If the young man is a casual lover he may tap him on the shoulder with the butt of his spear, when he will run away; or even fight him. However, there need be no trouble if the conventions are observed.

Courtship seems to be freest among the Eastern Jikany. There love affairs are carried on more or less openly, and a youth need not fear the girl's brother so long as they are on friendly terms and he is discreet. The girls of this area are, however, said to be less free with their favours than those of the Lou tribe. They are exacting in their demands for fine speeches, but will not allow intimacy unless they are sure that pregnancy will be followed by marriage. The Lou girls are said to be easier and their brothers more difficult. To the west of the Nile, at any rate in some parts, it is said that a girl's brother has the right to take a male calf and a cow calf if he catches a man having relations with his sister, but this penalty seems only to be exacted when it is believed that pregnancy has ensued, and I was told that if the beasts have been seized they will be returned should it be found that she had not conceived. If she is pregnant, they will be kept pending marriage negotiations.

584 A youth may have several sweethearts in different villages and a girl several lovers in different villages. At this time of his life a young man models himself on the accepted pattern of what a young man should be to win the approbation of his sweethearts and the regard of girls generally. He likes to know that they are looking at him and saying about him, when they chat together and share their secrets, that he is a *wut pany*, a real man. He pays great attention to his appearance and takes every opportunity to excel in feats of endurance and courage. It is for the benefit of the girls that he leaps behind his oxen in dry-season camps, 'when the people have met together', and chants poems. When asked whether

a man would chant if there were no girls near, a Nuer replied: 'And 584
if there were no girls near, what would he chant for?' A youth who wants a girl in marriage goes to her village or camp in the evening and chants there for an hour or two. He knows that she will understand that the poem is about herself. Her relatives know why he has come.

A youth is particularly careful not to be seen eating by un- 264
related girls: 'If he is not making love to them, he may do so some 834
time or to one of their relatives.' When I asked whether it would matter if your sisters saw you eating, the reply was, 'Do you make love to your sisters?' Food must never be mentioned in the presence of girls, and a man will endure severe hunger rather than let them know that he has not eaten for a long time. It is a strict rule of Nuer society that the sexes, unless they are close kin, avoid each other in the matter of food. Nuer do not go near persons of the other sex when they are eating. A man may mention food but not sexual matters before kinswomen, and he may mention sexual matters but not food before unrelated girls.

Girls are the arbiters of decorum, and the severest sanction of 562
a breach of good form is their disapproval. Not only is the shame 576
of it a sanction for etiquette, but it is a powerful influence in 584
making a youth generous, respectful to his elders, dutiful to his parents and kinsmen, hospitable to guests, industrious, and brave. The girls on their side are anxious to earn the good opinion of youths by correct behaviour in the home and in society.

It will have been observed that it rests entirely with a girl 584
whether she accepts a man's attentions and how far he presses his 836
advances. A girl who is fond of a youth wants him to marry her. If he is philandering she will, if she has any regard for her chastity, be frugal with her favours. The talk between a youth and his sweetheart is frequently the topic of marriage. He asks her whether she will marry him, and she says that she will if he has cattle and her parents consent; or he entreats her to allow intimacy, and she urges that she might become pregnant and he not marry her, and she would then be in trouble. However, if a girl is in love with a youth, and he has a winning manner, she may surrender to his pleading. Men often break the promises they make to girls when they want favours from them, and in looking for a wife a man may pass over all his sweethearts, past and present, and go with his friends to seek a spouse outside the circle of his usual acquaintances.

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582 One reason why this sometimes happens is that a man's sweethearts are frequently of his own age and Nuer usually marry girls younger than themselves. The prohibition on marriage to the daughter of a father's age-mate also influences a man's choice of a wife. Nevertheless, it is probably more usual for a man to choose
[581] one of his sweethearts. Marriage is the purpose implicit in every romance.

584 Sometimes a girl herself makes a proposal of marriage. She goes with some companions of her sex to the kraal of her favourite and drives away several of his father's cows to her home. Her father knows what she wants when he sees her returning with the cows, and if he disapproves of the youth he will send them back. If he likes the young man he says nothing, and when several days have passed and the cattle have not been returned, the young man knows that the girl's people are willing to discuss the matter. A father does not care to refuse his daughter when she is very much in love with a man, even when he is not rich, in case she runs away from home or hangs herself. Another way in which a girl can make a public proposal of marriage is a custom of early dry-season camps. Youths of a camp take their favourite oxen to parade them, led by their younger brothers, round a neighbouring camp, while they chant poems behind them and make graceful leaps into the air (*rau*). A girl who loves a youth may on such an occasion seize his ox and remove its lead. By so doing she pledges the youths to return to a harp-dance on another day. She keeps the cord and attaches a metal ring to it. Its owner later sends a small brother to fetch it. This is tantamount to a proposal and acceptance of marriage, and if the young man has enough cattle the betrothal ceremony takes place soon afterwards.

831 The facts outlined in this section lead to two conclusions: that
581 there is wide sexual freedom before marriage, and that sex life is from the beginning stamped by cultural interests. Apart from rules of incest, adultery, and good form, there are no checks placed on the expression of sex from its earliest manifestations. Nevertheless, even at the outset the compass is set towards marriage and children. Simulated coitus between children is part of a game of domestic and marital relationships. After initiation, young men make love to girls as much as they can, but though there is much casual intercourse it is considered rather gross, and the aim of both youths and girls is to form attachments of the lover-sweetheart

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
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kind, in which coitus, when it takes place at all, is only part of a 831 more complex relationship. The lover-sweetheart relationship has 581 within it the purpose or pretence of marriage. Very likely a particular courtship will not develop into marriage, but courtship is the recognized prelude to matrimony, and if a youth wants favours from his sweetheart, he must persuade her of his intentions. A love affair tends, therefore, to be a marriage courtship, and for this reason the pattern of the husband-wife relationship in the first stage of married life intrudes into it, and the pair act towards one another with the conjugal reserve of this stage. So strong is the cultural idea of marriage that, though devoid of irksome restraint and inhibitions, the path of sex life runs from childhood towards that union and, though circuitous, leads always to wedding, home, and family. Marriage is the end of a full sex life. After he is married a man settles down to care of herds and gar- 837 dens, and goes less and less to dances, and ceases to take much interest in girls. I was told that should he wish to have an affair with a girl his wife would have no objection and would probably help him in it. Women, on the other hand, once they are married, ought not to have relations with men other than their husbands.

Men now expect to marry younger than in the last generation, 582 when, I was told, a man would not usually marry before he was 25 to 30. Fathers were wont to say that they would themselves marry again, for these young wives would in any case go to their sons when they were dead. At what age a youth marries today depends on the size of his family, his place in it, whether his father is dead, the size of his family herd, and other circumstances.

As a rule, girls marry round about 17 or 18, though one sometimes sees an unmarried girl of over 20. If a girl is betrothed early the wedding and consummation ceremonies are delayed. Women, therefore, have their first children at an age when they are well fitted to bear them. So long as a girl is married to a man with cattle she has fairly free choice of a mate. Much depends on whether the girl's family approve of the man's family. In theory, the parents choose their daughter's husband and only formally ask her consent, which she should give in duty to her parents, for marriage is not her business but the business of her menfolk. In fact, it is very difficult for parents to force their daughter to marry a man she dislikes, and strong-minded girls stand up against family pressure on this issue.

582 In general, therefore, it may be said that if there is no kinship between a youth and a maiden and the youth's father has sufficient cattle, marriage is unlikely to be opposed by either family, unless there is bad blood between them. The first condition, however, makes it difficult usually for a man to find a mate in his own village, since, as we have seen, villagers are generally in one way or another kin. Also, a man is unlikely, except in parts of western Nuerland where some of the tribes are very small and there is much intercommunication between tribe and tribe, to marry outside his tribe, unless he lives near its border with another tribe, for he may then have relatives and friends on the other side of the border with whom he visits and on whom he can rely for help should difficulties arise about the return of his cattle in the event of divorce. Hence a man may generally be expected—I cannot give figures for the distribution of marriages—to take a wife from some village of his own tribe and within easy reach of his own village, that is to say, within his district or from among the people whom he habitually visits.

This fact, combined with the frequency with which Nuer live with their affines and maternal kin and their wandering and migratory tendencies, has produced a very great admixture within local groups of persons belonging to diverse lineages and tribal and foreign origins. It means also that, as I have already explained, any Nuer has kinship links of one kind or another with persons belonging to many different local communities. With each marriage these strands running from one community to another are increased and there results a complex network of kinship ties between members of opposed segments within the political structure.

II

583 Marriage among the Nuer is brought about by payment of bridewealth and by the performance of certain ceremonial rites. The rites cannot take place without the payments, but transfers of cattle do not by themselves bring about the union. Both are necessary, and they proceed in a connected movement towards the full establishment of the union. Each enforces and reinforces the other. The bride's people can, by holding up the rites, put pressure on the bridegroom's people to make the payments due to them,

and the bridegroom's people can, by withholding the cattle, induce the girl's family and kin to advance the ceremonies. First one pedal is pressed down and then the other as the marriage is propelled to its appointed end, the birth of children and the sharing of a home. It is understood that payments should have reached a certain point before a certain rite is held, and the performance of the rite is a recognition of the transfer of cattle up to that point. Payments of cattle and marriage rites therefore tend to alternate, though there is no fixity about the alternation and no marriage is exactly the same as another in this respect. The new social ties of conjugality and affinity are made stronger by each payment and by each ceremony, so that a marriage which is insecure at the beginning of the negotiations becomes surer with every new payment and rite; both sides, by the giving and receiving of cattle and by joint participation in the rites, becoming more deeply committed to bringing about the union. Therefore a marriage which has reached the final rites may be regarded as a stable union and will generally prove to be so. 583

The chief ceremonies are the *larcieng*, the *ngut*, and the *mut*: 584 the betrothal, the wedding, and the consummation. All three are important public events in Nuer life, though the betrothal rites are not held on so large a scale to the west of the Nile as to the east. Preparations for them are made days, even weeks, ahead, and they are talked about, especially by the young people, long before they take place. They are usually held in the rains, for there is then plenty of millet for porridge and beer, and people have the energy of the well-fed and can travel long distances without fatigue and dance and make love with equal vigour. A whole district attends them, the mere coming together of so many people making marriage a memorable event. Neighbours thus bear witness to the creation of the new social ties and by their presence sanction them.

Neighbours form the crowd at marriage feasts. They have no direct concern with the union. Apart from these people who attend the ceremonies for dancing and flirting and for the general sociability and excitement, are those who attend them for more serious purposes. It will be seen that there are always, besides prolonged discussions about bridewealth, sacrifices and other rites which have to be performed and which interest only some of the people present—the families and kin of the bride and bridegroom. These are the rites which express the relations between husband

584 and wife, husband's kin and wife's kin, and between the kin on one side or the other and the ghosts and spirits of their lineage. Those who stand outside these relationships are only spectators and often pay no attention to the rites at all. It is the dance which gives to the ceremonies their popularity and publicity; it is the rites which express and bring about their purpose.

Generally, as we have seen, there has long been an understanding between the youth and the girl he wishes to marry and she has been his sweetheart, though sometimes a youth decks himself as a bridegroom and in the company of another youth, arrayed in the ornaments of a best man, tours the country-side in search of a bride. In either case, the youth does not ask for the hand of the girl without her consent. He and his friends must then ask her family and they consult their kinsfolk. They know what is going on long before they are formally asked for her hand, so when a girl tells her menfolk in the byre that there are guests outside who wish to speak to them, the men know what they have come for. The suitor and his friends enter the byre and seat themselves to the right, the girl's people being seated to the left. They say that the girl has accepted them and ask whether the elders will accept them also. The elders ask them what cattle they have. This is the *riet ghok*, the cattle talk. The best man answers for the suitor, who, to create a good impression, says as little as possible. Both wear skins to cover their genitals before possible future parents-in-law. The bridegroom's best man and two other friends accompany him through all the trials of marriage and take full advantage of the opportunities for love-making and courtship. The girl's people accept the suit in a preliminary way and the youths depart to eat at a neighbouring homestead, since the suitor cannot eat in the home of the bride even at this stage.

There will later be other and more formal and definite discussions about the cattle in the byre of the father of the girl. The suitor has in the meanwhile been able to consult his own family and kinsmen, and when he returns with his friends for further talks the cattle are more precisely specified and ear-marked for particular claimants. The girl's people are satisfied. They say that the marriage is finished and tell the bridegroom, as he can now properly be called, and his friends to bring the *ghok lipa*, the cattle of betrothal, on a certain day. The discussions are still in an early stage, and by 'finished' they mean only that they are prepared to continue negotiations on the basis of the demands already met and to hold the betrothal ceremony. Before the visitors rise to go various men who can claim distant cognatic kinship with the bride, too distant for them to receive assigned portions of the bridewealth, may ask for gifts, ranging from a 'cow' (which means a sheep or goat) to a spear. Some of their demands are at once satisfied, the spears being handed over there and then, while others are met with promises or evasions.

A betrothal ceremony is not necessary. It is possible to proceed at once to the full wedding ceremony, and this is sometimes done when the bridegroom is a rich man with plenty of cattle and the bride is a *jut*, a girl who has passed the usual age of marriage. Usually the betrothal ceremony is held in the rainy season and the wedding in the following windy season. If there is a longer interval it is generally due to the immaturity of the bride. A poor suitor may pay two or three cows to a man who is short of stock at the time in order to obtain a lien on his small daughter while he collects adequate bridewealth to marry her later. Were the suitor a richer man he would seek a bride among older maidens, and were the father a richer man he would not feel the need to betroth his daughter at so early an age. A nubile maiden would not be betrothed for several years to a poor man. Her brothers would not brook the delay, for they themselves want to marry with the cattle of her bridewealth. Moreover, she would almost certainly become pregnant by some lover.

The holding of the betrothal ceremony means that the marriage is provisionally agreed upon by both sides, and the transfer to the bride's family of the cattle of the betrothal, three or four to ten head, is a further acknowledgement of this understanding. Before the ceremony takes place it has been agreed upon in general terms how many cattle should eventually be handed over. The ceremony is held in the bride's home. When the morning work of the kraal is finished the bridegroom and his party drive before them the cattle of the betrothal, led by a fine ox, the pride of the herd, its horns decorated with tassels, for the bride's brother. They advance on the bride's village in war formation and continue their marital exercises in her father's kraal, chanting their war songs before the huts and byres, especially before the hut of the bride's mother, who must be shown particular respect. The bridegroom's girl relatives and friends arrive about the same time as the men and

584 they also dance in the kraal. The youths of the bride's village then form their *dep*, village fighting formation, and start their own exercises and the girls of the village their dancing. Then the drums are brought out and general dancing begins. Towards sunset the betrothal cattle, which were left outside the village to graze, are brought into the kraal and tethered. Dancing, duelling, singing, and love-making between the youths and maidens continue well into the night, and all pay special attention to the bridegroom, resplendent with his ivory armlets and his tight-fitting armlet of brass rings, and distinguished also by the wedding stick in his hand. Before midnight the father of the bride leads forth an ox which, with a ceremonial rubbing of ashes on its back, is dedicated to the lineage ghosts and spirits in a long address by the *gwan buthni*, a man of a collateral lineage who acts for his family on ceremonial occasions as master of ceremonies. He tells the spirits to take their ox and let the people be at peace. His address is followed by shorter speeches by old men of the bride's kin and perhaps by her father, all first rubbing ashes on the beast's back. The *jicoa*, the bridegroom's people, take no part in these proceedings, but the flesh of the sacrifice is, with the exception of head, neck, and some of the entrails, their right, and if the ox is not to their liking they insist on a bigger one being sacrificed or, which amounts to the same thing from their point of view, being slaughtered for their dinner. When the addresses are finished the master of ceremonies of the bride's lineage, or her father or another of her senior kinsmen, stabs the ox to the heart with a single thrust. It stands for a moment and falls to the ground, those present watching to see if it falls cleanly. The bridegroom's people, often directed by the bridegroom, though he may not himself eat in the home of his future father-in-law, amid much shouting and chaffing, divide the meat among themselves, each kinsman receiving his customary due. The ribs and part of the back are taken next day by the visiting girls to their parents and elders in the bridegroom's village and the rest is eaten on the spot. The girls of the bride's village who, like its menfolk, receive little or none of the meat, are up half the night cooking porridge, preparing beer, and boiling the meat for their guests, for the girls of the bridegroom's party are too busy flirting with the youths to assist them.

In the morning there is more dancing and beer is served to the guests before they depart. Shortly before they go, the bridegroom, if he has not done so earlier, throws on to the threshold of his mother-in-law's hut, if she has not yet reached the menopause, a tethering-cord, as an earnest that the *yang pal*, a cow to prolong her fertility, will be paid. He will already have given her a present of tobacco. 584

The wedding takes place some weeks later, and in the meanwhile there are further discussions about bridewealth not only in the home of the bride's father but also in the home of her senior maternal uncle, who is responsible for the negotiations on the mother's side. His claims are less flexible and there cannot be much dispute about them, so it sometimes happens that they are settled provisionally in the father's byre, and that the final discussions with the uncle himself, who may live far away, are left till after the wedding or even till after the consummation. Some more cattle will probably be handed over before the wedding.

Between the betrothal and the wedding the bridegroom is *lipe nyal*, a man to whom a bride is affianced, but he and she are spoken of as man and wife and the bridegroom acts towards his in-laws with the full respect due from a son-in-law. From time to time he visits his bride's home in the company of his best man and other friends, and on these occasions he may try to have relations with her, but it will be difficult for him because he is closely watched and others probably share the hut in which he and she are sleeping. In any case he cannot enforce marital rights at this stage, and his only hope is to get his best man to persuade his bride to visit him in the gardens.

Both sides want to complete the marriage without undue delay. The bridegroom's people want their wife and the bride's people want their cattle so that they themselves can marry. They do not care to use the cattle of the betrothal for this purpose because these are only on pledge and, if negotiations break down, have at once to be returned, or others substituted if they have died. In the interval between betrothal and wedding ceremonies a penultimate agreement is reached about the cattle and both parties have had time to accommodate themselves to their new interrelationships. Neither party would pursue the marriage to the point of holding the wedding, with its expense and publicity, unless they were confident of the outcome.

Arrangements are made to hold the wedding on a certain day. 585
In the homestead of the bride the reception, especially the beer, is

585 being prepared, and in the homestead of the bridegroom there is much rejoicing, men and women chanting poems into the night. They also chant on their way to the wedding and during its celebration. The main features of a wedding are discussion about cattle in the morning and the invocation over the cattle of the bridewealth (*twoc ghok*), the wedding dance, and the wedding sacrifice, in the afternoon and evening.

Early in the morning the bridegroom's kin discuss the situation in his father's byre. They know what outstanding claims are likely to be advanced because they know the persons on the other side who stand in those relationships to the bride to which beasts are due by custom. They run over their herds and assign particular beasts to meet probable claims, so that no last-moment demand shall be made which they have not allowed for and cannot reject. Similar talks are going on among the bride's kin in her father's byre. They know more or less what animals the bridegroom can muster, and they have also to agree on the division of the bridewealth among themselves; the problem often being not so much the total number of beasts to be paid but to which of the bride's kin they shall be allotted. The bride's father will do his best to protect his son-in-law against too greedy kinsmen. As we have seen, the bridegroom's people have several times discussed the whole question of the bridewealth with the bride's people, but there are certain demands not yet agreed to, or kept back till the last moment so that they can be exacted under threat of forbidding the wedding dance.

The older people of the bridegroom's kin go ahead of the bridegroom's party of youths and maidens to the bride's home to finish the discussions in the late morning and early afternoon. They are generally still arguing when the bridegroom's party arrives, the paternal uncles on both sides taking the foremost part, for it is thought impolite of the fathers to take too prominent a part in the discussions, especially if they are younger than the uncles. The bridegroom's kin sit on the right side of the byre and the bride's kin on the left side, as they would sit were a case being arbitrated between them by a leopard-skin chief. The byre has been swept clean in expectation of the guests, and ox-hides and mats have been spread on the floor. The bridegroom and his master of ceremonies and the bride's father and his master of ceremonies wear wild-cat skins round their loins to hide their nakedness, and the master of ceremonies of the bridegroom holds a wedding stick across his knees. After the involved Nuer greetings have been exchanged they begin the final cattle talk over their pipes, each claim being stated and restated and discussed in the deliberate Nuer way—puff, puff, puff of tobacco, a few words, then puff, puff, puff again. While the *jicuong*, the people with rights to cattle of the bridewealth, are developing their claims, first on the father's side, then on the mother's side, the master of ceremonies of the bride brings a tray on which are lumps of tobacco and an equal number of pieces of charcoal and hands these round to the bridegroom's senior relatives. The cattle talk, even at this stage, is often loud and it looks, till one is used to Nuer, as though agreement would be impossible.

While the discussions are going on in the byre, the youths of the bridegroom's village charge into the homestead, chanting and skirmishing as they come. They rush the kraal and the bridegroom hurls his spear at his mother-in-law's *buor*, while the girls of the bride's village attack the visiting youths in mock combat and try to catch the bridegroom and seize his wedding stick. If they succeed he will have to pay them a calf. The *buor* is a mud windscreen, such as every Nuer woman has in front of her fireplace outside her hut. It is the symbol of domesticity and of wifely status and is associated with the spirit of the husband's lineage. On the occasion of the marriage of a daughter of the hut the windscreen is heightened, or a new one is constructed, for the bridegroom to spear, and some of his close kinsmen may spear it also. It is easily repaired. The spear belongs to the mother of the bride, but as it is a war spear one of the men of her homestead grabs it. The bridegroom has already given, or promised, her a pipe, tobacco, and a smaller spear, which she may give to a small son or keep for scraping hides. The bridegroom may also throw a spear into the threshold of the byre. This goes to his father-in-law. Other parties of youths from nearby villages are by this time beginning to arrive, for the wedding was announced by drums on the previous day. It is difficult for the older people, still talking in the byre and puffing away at their pipes and drinking beer, to hold up the dance any longer. They give permission for it to begin, and it continues for the rest of the afternoon and well into the night and is resumed on the following morning.

Before the dance begins, or as soon as it has begun, the kin on

585 either side signify their approval of the marriage by calling out the spear-names of the clans or maximal lineages of the bride and bridegroom and invoking the ghosts of their ancestors to look upon the cattle of the bridewealth—a rite which makes the ghosts partners to the union and witnesses of it. The master of ceremonies of the bride—his role is ritual and he has no part in the bridewealth talks—rises and demands a cow and receives the promise of a calf or sheep. He then walks up and down the byre, brandishing his spear and delivering a long address. He shouts out his ox-name and spear-name, and he calls on the ghosts of the bride's ancestors to witness that she is married openly with fifty cattle (it is conventional to say this number) and not with shame and by stealth. He says that she will bear her husband a male child. He addresses also the bridegroom's kin, his own kin, and anybody else he feels inclined to bring into his speech, and while talking he pours beer and sprinkles a little tobacco on the floor of the byre, on its threshold, and on the hearth in the centre of it, asking God (*Gwandong*) to take his 'cow', the tobacco. Then the master of ceremonies of the bridegroom's family, whose role is also purely ritual, has his say, or he may speak first. He talks in much the same vein and also pours out beer and sprinkles tobacco as an offering as he walks up and down the byre brandishing instead of a spear a wedding stick. The father of the bride may then speak and may be followed by a senior kinsman of the bridegroom. Afterwards people chant poems.

During the dance another rite, but not of the same importance, takes place. The father of the bride removes a tethering cord from one of the pegs in the kraal and throws it into the air between two lines of men drawn up for the purpose, the bride's relatives on one side and the bridegroom's relatives on the other. They try to hook it in the air with their spears and clubs, and whoever catches it may demand a calf or a goat from the opposite side, though he cannot be sure of receiving it.

Towards sunset, or on the following morning, the wedding ox, provided by the bride's father, is sacrificed by the master of ceremonies of her family or a senior kinsman. He rubs ashes on its back and speaks to it, saying: 'We do not kill you for an evil thing, we kill you about a good thing. Fall well.' It is a wedding ox and not a funeral ox. The meat, except for the head, neck, and a few other bits, goes to the bridegroom's kin who, as in the betrothal

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ceremony, divide the carcass, on the pattern of bridewealth distribution, between the kin on the father's side and those on the mother's side. The distribution of meat at these ceremonies depends on the number of relationships represented by persons or proxy, the number of persons standing in these relationships, and other circumstances. Most of it is taken back by the bridegroom's people to their homes for the older people who have not been able to attend the wedding and those who have remained to look after the herds and milk the cows. The rest is eaten on the spot.

A large part of the night is spent in dancing and flirting and love-making. The bride and the girls of her homestead are cooking while the bridegroom, who is fasting, is seeing that his companions are being properly looked after. On the following morning beer is served, pots being distributed to the bridegroom's kin—his father, his father's full brother, his father's half-brother, his paternal and maternal aunts, and his mother's full and half-brothers—who share the beer with members of their age-sets. After a meal the youths resume dancing and their elders, fortified with beer, probably start once more on the seemingly endless cattle talks, for there are generally an odd claim or two outstanding, the discussion of which was interrupted by the wedding dance, though their settlement was assured before it began.

If the maternal uncle of the bride lives far away he may give a wedding dance on his own account and sacrifice an ox at it. He may even do this when the father and he are members of the same large village. The senior paternal uncle occasionally does the same if he lives far away and is the father's half-brother.

The *ngut* does not conclude the marriage. It is the *mut* and the birth of a child which do this. But the chances are now greatly in favour of a successful conclusion, for had the bride's people not been satisfied with the bridewealth already handed over, or promised, they would not have allowed the dance to proceed. The wedding has also cost them a second ox for which there is no return in the event of the marriage not being consummated. Nevertheless, marriages do occasionally break up between wedding and consummation, though, in my experience, this is rare and is due to the reluctance of the bride rather than to objections or demands on the part of her family and kin.

The *mut*, the third of the three public marriage ceremonies, is

585 the one which, at any rate among the eastern Nuer,* makes the union legally binding. After it the husband, as he can then be called, can claim compensation for adultery, which he could not have done before. Previously the bride's brothers did not feel it obligatory to prevent her from attending evening dances in the neighbourhood, though they well knew from their own experience that she was likely to have relations with her old sweethearts at them. Her future husband's people could not then complain if she attended these dances, whereas after the *mut* they would make an unpleasant scene were they to find her at one, for this ceremony makes man and wife, and the cattle which have been paid are no longer regarded as a pledge but as marriage cattle. They now say of the bride *'Te yang jokde'*, 'She has a cow (cattle) on her back.' Moreover, if cattle paid to the bride's family and kin die in their kraals before the *mut*—and they may all die in a year of rinderpest—they have to be replaced by the bridegroom's people, whereas if they die after the *mut* they still count as part of the bridewealth and the husband's people do not have to substitute for them similar beasts. This distinction does not apply to animals killed by the bride's family and kin or which have been disposed of by them and have died outside their kraals, for these count as bridewealth before, as well as after, the consummation. On the other hand, any calves the cattle may bear before this ceremony count as original bridewealth and not as increment. Likewise, if the incomplete union is broken before the *mut*, all the cattle and their increase, including those which have died, must be returned, whereas in the event of divorce after the *mut*, the bride's people do not have to return animals which have died a natural death in their own kraals, and they have a right to retain two cows, the *yang yani* and the *yang miemne*, the cow of the skirts, the mark of married status, and the cow of the hairs, which are shaved off the bride's head at the consummation.

It is *mut*, therefore, which makes the union a contract. Consequently, it occasionally happens, when people are anxious to expedite the marriage, that the consummation takes place before the wedding. I heard it suggested that this should be done in the case of a youth who had been speared and could not take the

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* Among the western Nuer it would seem to be the *ruac ghok*, the invocation of the ghosts, which permits a suit of adultery and may therefore be considered the action which makes the union a contract.

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IV. Sweethearts

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585 bridegroom's usual part in weddings, and although it was decided to hold the wedding first, with the bridegroom as a spectator, no one suggested that in the circumstances a reversal of the ceremonies would have been improper. Mrs. Smith, of the American Mission, told me of a case of an elderly man who, desiring to marry a girl with the approval of her family but against her own wishes, prevailed on her relatives to rush her through the *mut*, leaving the wedding to be held later.

The day of the consummation has to be fixed in advance because beer has to be brewed for the visitors. In the early morning the bridegroom goes with a company of the youths of his village to fetch the bride, his womenfolk remaining behind to prepare for their visitors. They chant on the way, for this is a happy occasion for the village. Sometimes they find on arrival that the bride's mother has prepared beer for them. They have to ask her permission to take her daughter away and she asks them for presents before she gives it, such things as a spear, armlets, a pipe, and tobacco. The young men promise to give her what she asks for and depart, escorting the bride and her girl companions, who have oiled and decked themselves with ornaments for the ceremony. They go chanting to the bridegroom's village, one of the poems often being a composition of the bride in honour of her future husband, and there is much horseplay between the sexes. When they near the village the young men go ahead and the girls are met by the youths of the village, who bring them into the kraal where they serenade the bridegroom's mother with poems outside her hut. The ceremony is mostly a female affair, the men looking on.

After a while a kinsman of the bridegroom places a tethering-cord across the inner threshold of one of the huts and the bridegroom crawls over it, followed by the bride, the best man, and a special girl friend of the bride. This action is said to make the marriage fruitful. Then, towards evening, takes place the rite of consummation, though there is no invariable order of events in these ceremonies and no fixed time-table. The bride retires to a hut wearing a special goatskin cap and here the bridegroom joins her. His age-mates seek him out and say to him: 'Come now, let the people go to bed, come and loosen the bride's girdle.' He is bashful and gets the business over as quickly and inconspicuously as he can. He enters the hut and gives his bride a cut with a switch

585 and seizes her thigh, she refusing his advances and crouching by the wall of the hut. He strikes her with a tethering-cord, snatches the cap off her head, breaks her girdle, and consummates the marriage. Reluctance is imposed on her by custom and she pretends to resist even when she has known her husband often before in the gardens. It is not expected that a bride will be a virgin. Wedding and consummation ceremonies are held even for a girl who is pregnant or one who has been divorced and is being married a second time if she has not borne children. They say that 'She has returned to maidenhood'. It is only divorced women who have led profligate lives who are not remarried with these ceremonies. Maidenhood is a social, not a physical, state.

His duty done, the bridegroom leaves the hut, sometimes the bride's girl friends rushing at him and beating him with their fists as he emerges. The rest of the evening is given to the favourite pastimes of Nuer youth, *muong* and *lum*, visiting with the girls and making love to them. There will be many youths present: the people of the bridegroom's homestead, his mother's kin, if they live near, youths of the village, and bands of youths from villages for miles around, for the *mut* is a popular ceremony and it is known that many girls will attend it. Then all retire for the night, the bride's companions sleeping in a hut reserved for them.

On the following morning take place three rites which may on no account be omitted, the sacrifice (which may take place the evening before), the lustration, and the shaving of the bride's head. The sacrificial beast should be an ox, but if the bridegroom's father is poor, and at this stage of the marriage he is likely to be hard up, the 'cow of the consummation' may be a goat, or even just beer. The bridegroom's master of ceremonies rubs ashes on its back, calls out his spear-name, and speaks of the beast and the bride, telling the spirits and ghosts of his lineage to witness the union and to bless it with sons so that the lineage may continue. He says to them, 'Now you see your ox; you see this maid; let her be a good wife; let her bear many children, many sons; let her work well in her husband's home, milk the cows, dry the cattle dung; let her be a faithful wife and not a profligate'; and so forth, asking them to make the union a lasting and happy one. He then spears the ox and it is cut up by the wife's people, the visitors, and divided among them in the customary portions, only the head, neck, and a few other pieces of meat going to the people of the

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bridegroom. The visiting maidens at once cook and eat the ribs, kidneys, and stomach, besides filling themselves with porridge and beer, the bride alone abstaining because she may not eat in the home of her mother-in-law. They take the rest of the carcass back to their homes for their elders. The master of ceremonies may perform another duty associated with his office in anointing the bride with butter. Her father will already have blessed her in this manner before she set out for her husband's home.

Now takes place the rite of lustration, the *lak tetni ka cik*, the washing of the hands with bracelets. The visiting maidens, the young wife's companions, sit in a hut and a pot of warm water is passed to them. One of them washes her hands in the water and then takes a bracelet off her arm, drops it into the pot, and passes the pot to one of the husband's kinsfolk outside, who, squatting in front of it, likewise washes his hands in the water, and then fishes out the bracelet. The pot is returned to the hut and a different maiden and a different kinsman repeat the action of the first pair. All the close kinsfolk of the husband—his father's brothers and sisters, his mother's brothers and sisters, and his own brothers and sisters, and so on—are supposed to receive a bracelet, but, in fact, persons standing in some of these relationships will be absent. Any person who can claim kinship with the husband can demand a bracelet. If a man's dip into the pot reveals a poor bracelet he does not hesitate to upbraid the girl who put it there and he may select a better one from those on her arm.

The concluding rite of the ceremony is the act from which it derives its name, the shaving of the wife's head (*mut nyier*) by a member of her husband's family. This may take place after the departure of her companions, for it is a domestic affair of the husband's family, of which the wife is now a member. The shaving of the head signifies this change in her status. People speak of the rite as 'the removal of the hairs of maidenhood', and they say afterwards of the girl '*Ca ciek*', 'She has become a wife'. She is at the same time stripped of all her ornaments, which are divided among her husband's kin, and she is arrayed in new finery provided by her husband. She belongs to his, and not her father's, people now and it is for them to adorn her.

The *mut* is the consummation of marriage, but not its completion, which is the birth of a child. The young wife is now called *ciek ma kau*, a newly-wed. Her parents give her a hut of her

585 own and a sleeping-hide, a brush, and a couple of gourds for ablutions. [591] When her husband comes to visit her in her father's homestead he sleeps with her in this hut. She continues in all other respects to lead the life she led before marriage, and after her husband's visits she hangs up the hide and domestic utensils and sleeps with her unmarried sisters. On these visits her husband stays at a neighbouring homestead as he cannot eat in the home of his parents-in-law and ought not to be seen there at all. When someone tells the wife that her husband has come, so that she may prepare for him, she feigns annoyance or lack of interest, pretending that she is still unmarried, a shyness she keeps up with third persons, though she is at ease when alone with her husband. When everyone is asleep he visits her and spends the night with her, leaving before any of the bride's people are about. Her parents are supposed to know nothing of his visits, though, of course, they know all about his movements, and it is even said that his mother-in-law may rise especially early and squint through a crack in the door of her hut to see him depart. I was told that should he oversleep and his mother-in-law see his spears outside her daughter's hut, she makes them forfeit, and he would be ashamed to ask for them back. It is not till a child has been born that the husband is accepted by his wife's people as one of themselves. He is then the father of their daughter's child and through the child has a kind of kinship with them. Till this happens the husband continues to lead the life he lived before marriage, a bachelor life with his younger brothers in their father's byre. His wife visits him only on rare occasions and for a formal purpose, as when, at harvest time, she brings him coverings she has made for the grain on the drying-platforms, or when she takes him a bundle of well-cooked porridge made from the first millet of the year—a pretty custom known as *puthene kuan*, honouring with porridge.

842 All are equally anxious for a child to be born, the husband and wife because they want a son, and the wife's parents and kin because they cannot, without risking complications, dispose of the cattle of the marriage till a first-born completes the union. Those whose daughters they might wish to marry would not be happy about accepting such cattle as bridewealth in case they had suddenly to be returned to the husband.
853 When a child is born the
591 mother remains with her parents till she has weaned it. This is a
862 suitable regulation, because after bridewealth has been paid the

husband's father is likely to be short of lactating cows, while the [853]
wife's parents will have plenty of milk from their herd. If, for some 862
reason, the wife goes to live with her husband before the child is 591
weaned, it may not be weaned without the consent of her parents, and I have seen a husband pay several cattle to atone for contravention of this rule. A *keagh*, first child, belongs to *cieng mandongni*, the home of his maternal grandparents, and if he is weaned in his father's home he returns to live with them, a boy till he is initiated and a girl till she is betrothed. This is the rule, though there is variation in practice, depending on the ability of the maternal grandparents to support the child and on the relations between them and their son-in-law.

Shortly after the birth of her first-born the wife, now called 851
paidap, a nursing mother, brings the baby to her husband's home and lays him in the ashes of the hearth in the centre of his grandfather's byre, a rite known as *nong puka*, the bringing to the ash. Beer has been prepared and is drunk by a few senior kinsmen of the husband who live in his hamlet. It is a domestic, and not a
public, ceremony. The wife spends a few days in her husband's 851
home, and returns with the child to the village of her parents. She 591
has as yet no hut of her own in her husband's homestead.

When his first-born has been weaned the husband builds his wife a hut in his father's homestead facing the family kraal. He then goes to ask his parents-in-law for his wife. They do not deny him, even if, as is likely, some of the bridewealth cattle are still owing. They give her a horn spoon and a gourd and she takes these with her to her husband's home. The gift of a spoon is emphasized by Nuer in speaking of marriage, because it is a recognition that the woman is now, in the full sense, a wife, who will eat of the porridge of her own gardens with the milk of her own herd. She now milks her husband's cows instead of her father's and hoes the gardens of his home and not those of her childhood. Before she is given a spoon, even if she hoes a garden at her husband's home she takes the harvest back to her father, or she may live at her husband's home and cultivate in her father's village, if it is not far. It is only when a man's bride has borne him a child and tends his hearth that she becomes, in the Nuer sense, his wife. She then makes a mud windscreen, and the spirit of his lineage comes to dwell there. Later his father tells him to build a byre and gives him a few cows to start a herd.

585 The marriage has thus reached completion through many stages: betrothal ceremony, wedding ceremony, consummation ceremony, the birth of a child, the bringing of the first-born to his father's byre, and the presentation to the wife of a spoon as a sign of her domestic separation from her family. She comes to her husband's home not as a wife but as a mother whose breasts have suckled a child of their lineage.

III

583 Like many other African peoples the Nuer marry by the family and kin of the bridegroom handing over cattle to the family and kin of the bride. The marriage is brought about by this payment and by the performance of the series of ceremonial acts I have just described. These ceremonies and payments of cattle proceed *pari passu* as inter-connected movements towards the completion of the union. It should be remembered that Nuer do not consider the union to be complete till a child has been born of it, even though spouses may continue to cohabit where the union proves to be unfruitful.

I first describe the principles on which bridewealth is paid. These can be simply stated. In actual marriages the payment and distribution of the cattle may be complicated, but if one asks a Nuer how, on marriage, the bridewealth is divided, he gives at once its ideal distribution and it will be found that actual distribution in any particular marriage is made to approximate as far as possible to this ideal. Consequently, once the general principles of transfer are understood, the distribution of cattle on any particular marriage can be readily understood also.

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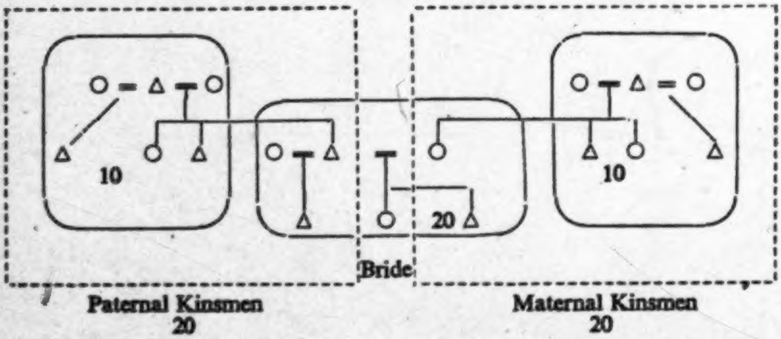
602 Bridewealth should consist of 40 head of cattle. Among the eastern Nuer 20 are said to go *kwi gwan*, to the father's side, and 20 *kwi man*, to the mother's side, of the bride. Equal division between the bride's paternal kinsmen (including her father) and her maternal kinsmen (including her mother) is thus the first rule of distribution. Of the 20 beasts which go to the father's side, 10 remain with the father (or his sons) and 10 are divided among his family (his parents, brothers, and sisters); and of the 20 beasts which go to the mother's side, 10 remain with the mother (or her sons) and 10 are divided among her family (her parents and brothers and sisters). The second rule, therefore, is that the cattle are distributed in fixed proportions between three families: the

bride's own family, her father's family, and her mother's family. 583
The bride's own family receive 2[illegible] head of cattle, which are known 602
as the *ghok dieth*, the cattle of parenthood. The families of the bride's father and of her mother each receive 10 head of cattle, known collectively as the *ghok cungni rar*, the cattle of the outside claimants, i.e. those who are outside the bride's own family. It should be noted in the diagram below, in which these distributions are shown, that the bride's mother's sons count as maternal relatives while her father's sons by a different mother count as her paternal relatives.

However, a Nuer does not state such distributions in terms of families but, when he is discussing the mode of distribution, in terms of individual relationships and, when he is discussing particular marriages, in reference to persons standing in these relationships. Relationships are defined by reference to the bride. A Nuer counts the ideal distribution as follows:



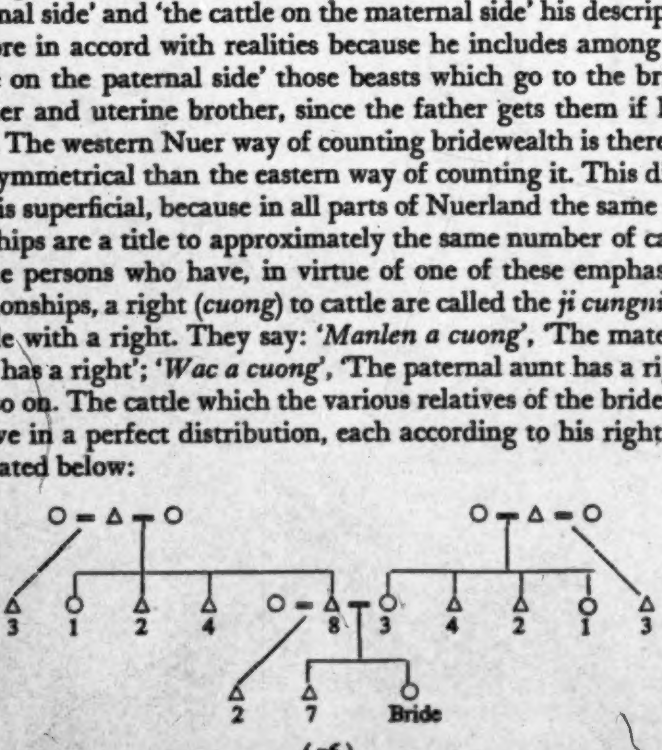
	Cattle	Total
KWI GWAN (on the paternal side)		
Gwan (father)	A cow and its calf, a cow and its calf, an ox, another ox, a cow, and a calf	8
Gat gwan (father's son)	A cow, and another cow	2
Gwanlen (*indit*) *kwi mane* or *kwi dwiel* (father's elder brother by the same mother)	A cow and its calf, a calf, and an ox	4
Gwanlen kwi gwane or *kwi luak* (father's brother by a different mother)	A cow and its calf, and an ox	3
Gwanlen (*intot*) *kwi mane* or *kwi dwiel* (father's younger brother by the same mother)	A cow, and an ox	2
Wac (father's sister)	A heifer	1
		20

MARRIAGE

583 *KWI MAN* (on the maternal side)	*Cattle*	*Total*
602 *Man* (mother)	A cow and its calf and a heifer	3
Deman (brother by the same mother)	An ox, another ox, a cow, another cow, a cow and its calf, and another cow	7
Nar (*indit*) *kwi mane* or *kwi dwiel* (mother's elder brother by the same mother)	A cow and its calf, another cow, and an ox	4
Nar kwi gwane or *kwi luak* (mother's brother by a different mother)	A cow and its calf, and an ox	3
Nar (*intot*) *kwi mane* or *kwi dwiel* (mother's younger brother by the same mother)	A cow and its calf	2
Manlen (mother's sister)	A heifer	1
		20

I do not guarantee that if one were to ask any Nuer from the eastern part of their territory how bridewealth is distributed in his country he would receive a list identical with the one I have given, for there might be shifts here and there of a cow or an ox, but the balance and proportions would be as I have recorded them. Among the western Nuer, when a man speaks of 'the cattle on the paternal side' and 'the cattle on the maternal side' his description is more in accord with realities because he includes among 'the cattle on the paternal side' those beasts which go to the bride's mother and uterine brother, since the father gets them if he is alive. The western Nuer way of counting bridewealth is therefore less symmetrical than the eastern way of counting it. This difference is superficial, because in all parts of Nuerland the same relationships are a title to approximately the same number of cattle.

The persons who have, in virtue of one of these emphasized relationships, a right (*cuong*) to cattle are called the *ji cungni*, the people with a right. They say: '*Manlen a cuong*', 'The maternal aunt has a right'; '*Wac a cuong*', 'The paternal aunt has a right', and so on. The cattle which the various relatives of the bride will receive in a perfect distribution, each according to his right, are indicated below:



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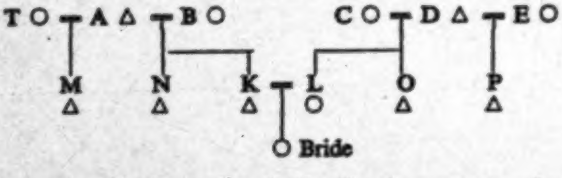
It must be added that the four grandparents of the bride are entitled each to a cow, called *wangnen*, in certain circumstances, but they are not mentioned in the distribution given above because it is assumed that by the time their granddaughter is old enough to be married they will be dead. It is a rule that in the event of any claimant being dead his, or her, sons inherit the right to cattle. Thus the cattle of a *gwanlen* (father's brother) go to the *gaatgwanlen* (father's brother's sons), the cattle of a *wac* (father's sister) go to the *gaatwac* (father's sister's sons), and so forth. But whereas cattle must be paid, whatever may be the circumstances, to the names of these kinsmen, a grandparent only receives a cow if he, or she, saw the bride before he, or she, died. It is possible, therefore, for there to be four *wangnen* claims, but there are generally only one or two at most. The *wangnen* of the father's father goes to one of his sons by a different mother to the father's mother. The *wangnen* of the father's mother goes to one of her sons other than the father. These are the *wangnen kwi gwane*, the cows of the grandparents on the paternal side. There may also be two *wangnen kwi mane*, cows of the grandparents on the maternal side, that of the mother's father going to one of his sons by a different mother to the bride's mother's mother, and that of the mother's mother going to one of her sons. Thus in the diagram below, A's cow goes to M, B's cow goes to N, C's cow goes to O, and D's cow goes to P. As will be explained later, these cattle of the grandparents are not paid in addition to the forty already listed.



Some features of this mode of distribution are worth attention. The cattle are divided among both paternal and maternal relatives of the bride and this bilateral distribution may be wrongly interpreted. It is by no means simply a recognition of the bride's kinship to certain of her kinsfolk, but is also an acknowledgement of obligation between siblings and towards affines. The payment to the bride's paternal uncles is not only an expression of the relationship between a father's brother and his brother's daughter, but also of that between brother and brother. A man marries from the

583 602 family herd in which his brothers have equal rights with himself, and his wife is, as the brothers say, 'our wife', because she was married with 'our cattle'. She acts in domestic duties as a wife to her husband's unmarried brothers as well as to her husband, although she cohabits with him alone, and her children are all 'our children' since they are 'children of our cattle'. All the brothers therefore have rights in the daughters of each. Brothers stubbornly insist on these rights, and it often happens that a girl's paternal uncle proves to be the most serious obstacle to bringing about her marriage, for he will not hesitate to veto it if he thinks he is not getting his fair share of the cattle. Every Nuer knows exactly where he stands in such matters, for even children know how bridewealth ought to be distributed and can at once tell roughly what cattle each kinsman will receive on the marriage of the daughter of one of them.

Likewise the transfers made to the bride's maternal uncles are not only an expression of the relationship between a mother's brother and his sister's daughter, but also of that between a man and his wife's brother. Nuer stress that at marriage only part of what is due to the bride's family is handed over to them and say that the rest will be paid when their daughter has borne female children and these children are married. The extra-family kinsmen, the paternal and maternal uncles and aunts of the bride, receive their share of her bridewealth once and for all at her marriage, often at the expense of the intra-family kinsmen, her parents and brothers and sisters, who will, in compensation, receive in addition to what is paid to them at her marriage some ten head of cattle on the marriage of each of her daughters. It must not be forgotten that the maternal uncles and aunts of the bride are the brothers-in-law and the sisters-in-law of her father, and that the part of her bridewealth paid to [illegible] is to some extent considered as a deferred payment incurred at her mother's marriage. Hence Nuer, when counting the cattle to be paid on marriage, conclude by saying: 'And when the bride's daughters are married more cattle will be paid to their mother's brothers.' It should be noted also that the sibling relationship is acknowledged in the distribution of bridewealth on the maternal as on the paternal side. All the brothers have rights in their sister and in that part of the bridewealth of her daughters which is due to their family. Here again, even small boys know their rights as maternal uncles,

or as future maternal uncles, and youths regard them as policies 583
which will fall due in the future and enable them to marry wives 602
themselves.

We must distinguish, in discussing the transmission of bridewealth among the Nuer, between the transfer of cattle by the bridegroom's people and its distribution among the kinsfolk of the bride. The bridegroom's people are only interested in this distribution in so far as it affects the total of cattle they will have to pay. They come to the lengthy negotiations which precede the wedding dance prepared to pay a certain number of beasts, and so long as their estimate is not exceeded it is a matter of little interest to them what arrangements about their distribution the kinsmen of the bride make among themselves. The bride's father must make his own terms about the distribution with his brothers and sisters, and the bride's senior maternal uncle with his brothers and sisters. The necessity for them to come to some agreement among themselves will be evident later.

Another important feature of bridewealth distribution is the distinction made between sons of the mother (*gaatman*) and sons of the father (*gaatgwan*). This distinction is made not only between the full and half-brothers of the bride but also between the full and half-brothers of her father and mother. In the generation of her uncles the differentiation between full and half-brothers is indicated by stating whether they are uncles *kwi mane*, on the mother's side, or *kwi gwane*, on the father's side; the terms *kwi dwiel* on the side of the hut, and *kwi luak*, on the side of the byre, being commonly employed as alternative indications. The statement of the ideal distribution thus assumes polygamous families.

When the father of the bride is alive the distinction between her full and half-brothers is only formally represented in the division of her bridewealth because the cattle given to any of her brothers join their father's herd and he uses them as is customary, which means that they are held as family stock from which each son marries in order of seniority, being given by his father for this purpose what cattle are available, without regard to the title by which they entered the herd. Thus one son may marry with cattle which were allotted to another son in the distribution of their sister's bridewealth; so the fact that on the marriage of one of the sisters several cattle are allotted to the uterine brother does

583 602 not mean that he can dispose of them as he pleases, and he would not, were his father alive, be able to reserve them for his own marriage exclusively. If the bride's half-brother is older than he the half-brother will use some of these cows to marry and no objection can be raised to his doing so. To object would, in Nuer eyes, be a grave breach of custom amounting to the breaking up of the family and home and the severing of vital bonds of kinship. Even after the father is dead the herd ought to remain common stock, and all cattle accruing to him and his sons on the marriages of his daughters ought to join it for the benefit of all his sons alike, so that they may marry from it in order of seniority. If there is only one widow this is likely to happen, but when there are several widows the family often breaks up, the widows going with their children to live in different places, and the herd may in course of time become scattered. Eventually the family, especially the composite or polygamous family, ceases to have corporate interests in a common herd and splits into a number of property units, each brother having a family and herd of his own. The brothers then live in separate homesteads and sometimes in separate villages, and the cattle they receive as paternal and maternal uncles therefore join different herds. Often some of the brothers are by this time dead and the cattle then go to their sons, whose ties with their paternal uncles are weaker than those uniting brothers.

In reckoning the cattle which have to be transferred Nuer distinguish between those beasts which receive a precise linguistic indication and the remainder. Those terminologically differentiated are regarded as the minimum payment on which negotiations can start. Whatever else the bride's family and kin get, they must get certain animals or the marriage cannot take place. Hence these basic claims take precedence and their titles are always the first to be acknowledged. The conventional order is as follows:

1. *wangnen gwane*, the cows of the paternal grandparents.
   wangnen mane, the cows of the maternal grandparents.
2. *yang gwane kene doude, ke thakde*, the cow of the father with its calf, and his ox.
   yang mane kene doude, the cow of the mother with its calf.
3. *yang gwanlene kene doude, ke thakde*, the cow of the paternal uncle with its calf, and his ox.
   yang nara kene doude, kene thakde, ke puangde, the cow

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of the maternal uncle with its calf, and his ox, and his *puang* (ox).

4. *dou* (*nac*) *waca*, the calf (heifer) of the paternal aunt.
   dou (*nac*) *manlene*, the cow (heifer) of the maternal aunt.
5. *yang kwoth gwande*, the cow of the father's spirit.
   yang kwoth mande, the cow of the mother's spirit.
6. *thak deman*, the ox of the uterine brother.
   thak gat gwan, the ox of the paternal half-brother.

It will be observed that these titles to cattle are in pairs of collateral relationships. If a person standing in any one of the relationships is dead, his claim takes precedence over claims of the living, and for this reason they generally begin the tally with the *wangnen* cows of the grandparents. 'First the claims of the ghosts must be settled, then we can settle the claims of us who remain alive.' In actual payments of bridewealth the fact that the kin of the bride are able to claim one or more cows of this title does not mean that they receive more cattle on this account than they would otherwise have done. Circumstances, to be discussed later, fix the total payment within approximate limits known to both parties to the contract, so that all that happens is that a cow which would in any case go to one of the bride's uncles as part of his portion of the bridewealth is handed over to the name of a dead grandparent.

A few words may be said about the *yang kwoth*, cow of the spirit, which figures in most bridewealth transactions. This animal is paid in honour of the spirit of the father or of the mother of the bride. The spirits are of various kinds. If one of them is a totem and is associated with a special colour, the bride's parents will endeavour to obtain from the bridegroom's kin a cow of that colour, e.g. a tawny cow for the lion-spirit and a brindled cow for the crocodile-spirit. A cow so dedicated to a spirit must remain in the kraal of the parents, and now and again they rub ashes along its back and pour milk over its tethering-peg and invoke the spirit. The spirits of the family are thus made cognizant of the marriage and are a party to the pact, just as the ghosts are informed of what is taking place and are invoked as witnesses at the wedding ceremony. Spirits and ghosts are *jicungni*, claimants entitled to a share in the bridewealth, and were they to be denied their right the marriage would not be fruitful. When each parent has a different

583 602 spirit both must be honoured by having a cow of the bride-cattle dedicated to it, though one spirit may receive a cow on the marriage of one daughter and the other on the marriage of her sister. Here again, this does not necessarily mean that the family of the bride get an extra cow, for generally one of the cows they would in any case have received is dedicated to a spirit and paid in its name. Sometimes, however, the bride's people do not put forward the claim till the end of the marriage negotiations, when the bridegroom's people think that a settlement has been reached and have already offered as many cattle as they are prepared to give. It is more difficult for them to refuse an extra cow to a spirit than to a man. If they are wise they will get to know all about the spirits of the bride's family—there may be more than two—and anticipate the claim by keeping a cow in reserve to meet it. Generally these essential claims are settled at the first bridewealth discussions held in the byre of the bride's father.

The maternal side of the family have a prior claim to consideration in that, as already explained, their portion is regarded to some extent as a deferred payment standing over from the marriage of the bride's mother. If there are not enough cattle to satisfy everyone at the time of the marriage the paternal relatives are usually prepared to allow the bridegroom to remain for some years in their debt, but the maternal relatives are less willing to forgo immediate satisfaction. The maternal kinsmen cannot make exorbitant demands because they have only a right to a conventional proportion of the bridewealth and the approximate number of cattle to be paid to them is therefore determined by the total number to be paid all round.

583 602 178 In marriages today the actual payments and distributions of cattle to definite persons, as distinct from the ideal allotment of fixed portions of the bridewealth to relationships, vary according to circumstances, the chief of which, apart from the relative desire of both parties to bring about the union, are the wealth in stock of the Nuer as a whole, the resources of the bridegroom's family and kin, the number of claimants and the shares allotted to them in other marriages, and the configuration of the bride's family.

There is good reason to suppose that till thirty to forty years ago cattle were so plentiful in Nuerland that bridewealth was paid at the ideal rate of 40 head. In recent years the herds have diminished through rinderpest, and raids on Dinka stock, the

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traditional means of recuperation, are prevented by the presence of the Anglo-Egyptian government. Diminution has been fairly uniform throughout the whole of Nuerland, and it would today in all parts be impossible for a man to raise as many as 40 head of cattle for marriage. The usual payment is from 20 to 30. It has been mentioned that there are a number of relationships with basic rights and the persons standing in these relationships, or representing those standing in them, must be guaranteed their portions to the number of cattle enumerated in the list presented above. Consequently, even if there are no *wangnen* and spirit claims, the bridewealth cannot fall to less than 16 beasts. On the other hand, it cannot rise to more than the bridegroom and his people possess or are prepared to give, what they are prepared to give being mainly decided by what they possess. The bridewealth will therefore be somewhere between these two points. Now, the bride's family know fairly accurately what cattle are available and state their demands in the light of their knowledge, and the bridegroom's family know who are likely to put forward claims and, also, how many cattle they can muster, and they make their offer accordingly.

It is evident from the lengthy discussions that continue for hours at a time, and sometimes for days on end, that there is no absolutely fixed payment. What happens is that the basic claims are first settled in a preliminary manner, for there can be little argument about these, and further demands are then debated. The main concern of the bridegroom's party is to conduct the negotiations in such a way that they will not have promised up to the estimate they have allowed for before an adequate number of cattle have been allotted to all the persons who are beyond question entitled to them. They usually aim at settling all the outside claims before tackling the full family claims, in the settlement of which they may expect some forbearance. The family are as anxious as the bridegroom's people to settle the outside claims, for they are claims on the bride's father as much as on the bridegroom, and until they are met he cannot reap any benefit himself from the marriage. To facilitate their settlement the family are generally prepared to forgo some of their own rights and the expectation of full immediate payment.

The discussions are in terms of particular cattle. The bridegroom's people offer certain animals and these animals are known

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to the bride's people. The spokesman for the bridegroom says, for example, that they have a brindled cow and its calf in such-and-such a kraal, and the spokesman for the family replies that these will be the cow of the mother and its calf. The bridegroom's maternal uncle says that he will give a white cow with a black head and rump and its calf, and a white-faced ox, and the people of the byre decide that the cow and its calf will be the cow of the father and its calf, and the ox will be the ox of the uterine brother. To follow these negotiations it must be remembered that they have been preceded by lengthy private discussions by each party among themselves. The bridegroom's party have agreed among themselves which particular animals each is willing to contribute, what they intend to offer the bride's people, what claims are likely to be put forward, and how they can be met. The bride's party have discussed what animals the other side possess, what they are likely to offer, and what they themselves want. The haggling at the final meetings between the two parties is on the surface and concerns only marginal beasts which the bride's party hope to obtain above what the bridegroom's party wish to give. It is not really greed on one side or parsimony on the other, but part of the traditional procedure of marriage. Both sides are expected to behave in this way in marriage negotiations.

As long as the girl's family receive a good number of the cattle before she has passed through the final ceremonies and can expect that the remainder will eventually be paid they will not press for settlement. Nuer can be very generous in this matter, and if a son-in-law is respectful and industrious they will not break the union because he takes a long time to pay the final cows, for marriage is not simply handing over a girl in exchange for cattle but is the creation of a series of new social relationships which, once formed, are not easily or lightly severed, especially when the union is completed by the birth of a child.

Sometimes the final cows are never paid. If the husband has cattle and his wife's brothers want to marry, they may raid his herd and take the beasts owing to them. But debts of this kind are subject to a rule of limitations. If the cattle have not all been paid before the eldest son of the marriage is initiated into manhood the debt lapses. Therefore a brother tries to obtain the remainder of his sister's bridewealth before this happens. An illustrative case occurred in western Nuerland in 1936. An initiated lad, who had

been working for me, brought back three cows to add to the family 583
herd in his father's kraal and his maternal uncle seized one of 602
them on the grounds that his mother's bridewealth had not been fully paid. The elders of the village counselled its return, saying that the calves would die, and their advice was taken. The opinion expressed on this occasion was that when a son is initiated he becomes part-owner of the family herd and that a maternal uncle cannot take cattle from the herd of his sister's son in payment for his sister's marriage. Also, if cattle are owing, claimants cannot take them from the bridewealth of a daughter of the union, that is to say, from cattle allotted to the bride's family. They get their due portions from the daughter's marriage, but 'the cattle of a mother and the cattle of her daughter may not meet'. It is thought that the daughter would be barren were this to happen.

Distribution, as distinct from the total transfer, is also affected by the number of persons who demand cattle. There may be several persons standing to the bride in any given relationship. If, for example, there is only one paternal aunt, she gets her cow on the marriage of each of her brothers' daughters. If, on the other hand, there are several paternal aunts, they take it in turn to receive the cows due to that relationship. Difficulties are sometimes settled between two claimants of like relationship to the bride by one of them taking a cow and the other its first calf. Sometimes they take it in turn to receive their due, and, at the same time, admit the rights of the others to a calf each. In this way each claimant may ultimately receive part of the bridewealth on each occasion of its distribution. On the other hand, there may be no person in the relationship entitled to cattle. In this case, as already explained, a lineal heir is entitled to the beasts; but a collateral kinsman may not inherit. If there is neither a claimant nor a lineal heir other relatives on that side of the family receive larger shares than they would have expected had there been either. To reach an understanding of any actual distribution it is often necessary to relate it to distributions at other marriages, for, especially today when cattle are scarce, consideration will always be given, in seeking a fair agreement, to rights claimed or forgone in previous, and to expectations in future, marriages of daughters of the family and kin.

Paternal kinsmen genealogically farther removed from the bride than those indicated by specific kinship terms (relationships with

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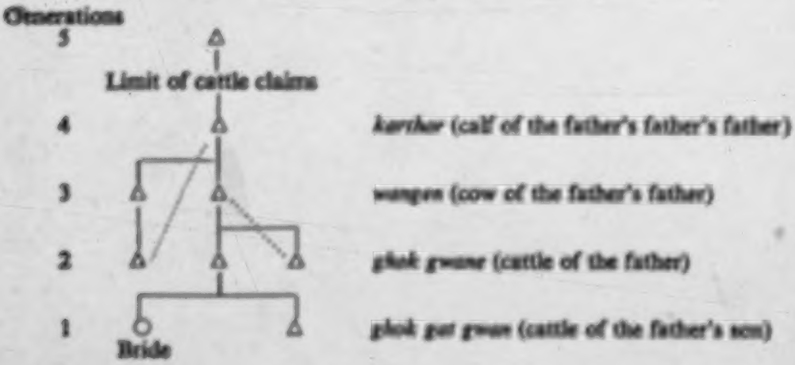
a fixed title to bridewealth) may claim some small gift, such as a sheep, goat, or spear, in their own right from the bridegroom's people. Though these casual claims count as part of the bridewealth in that their return can be asked for in the event of divorce, their settlement is regarded more as a courtesy than as an obligation. A borderline case between bride-cattle proper and such small gifts to distant kinsmen is that of the calf, called *karthar* among the western Nuer, which may be claimed by a collateral kinsman who is a patrilineal descendant of the bride's father's father's father. This payment is sometimes made, as a sign that the patrilineal limit of bridewealth claims has been reached and that no demands will be accepted from collateral kinsmen tracing their common descent with the bride from an ancestor yet farther removed.


Generations
5
Limit of cattle claims
4
karthar (calf of the father's father's father)
3
wangen (cow of the father's father)
2
ghok gwane (cattle of the father)
1
ghok gat gwan (cattle of the father's son)
Bride

However, any cognatic kinsman up to six or seven generations removed from a common ancestor with the bride may attest his kinship by asking a small gift, and it will not be refused. This privilege, which is not widely exercised, includes also natural and affinal kin. I have seen a bride's maternal uncle's natural (not legal) son and a bride's paternal uncle's wife's brother demand, and given, spears at marriages. The master of ceremonies of the bride's family is always given a calf, sheep, or goat, known as 'the cow of the spear' (with which he made the invocation).

As said above, actual distribution of bridewealth among persons depends also on the configuration of the bride's family. At this point it need only be said that distribution on the marriage of a daughter born of a simple legal union is the pattern for distribution at marriages of daughters born of other kinds of union. We

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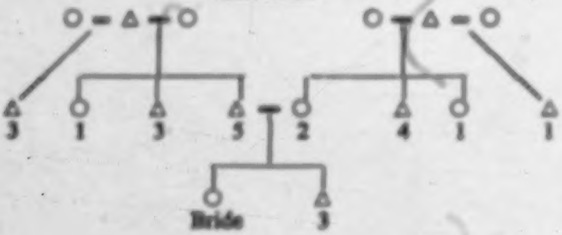
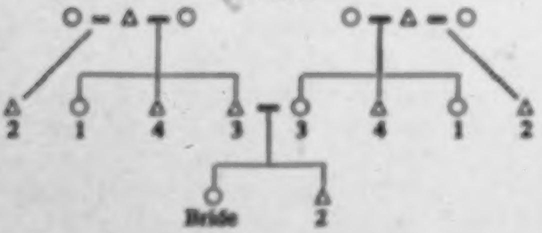
need only note further that when the genitor of the bride is a different person from her pater, as is often the case among the Nuer, he has a right to a cow, 'the cow of the begetting', and that this takes precedence over all other claims. If he has also brought up the bride his right is more extensive.

I conclude this section on bridewealth with three illustrations of actual payments and distributions at the present time. The first is from the Lou tribe of eastern Nuerland, the second from the Dok tribe of western Nuerland, and the third from the Leek tribe of western Nuerland.

Lou Tribe



Dok Tribe



It will be observed from these two examples that in spite of smaller payments today the balance of distribution between paternal and maternal relatives is preserved. It will be noted also that smaller bridewealth does not mean that the rights of the family take precedence over those of the extra-family kinsmen. On the contrary, the family bear the greater proportional loss. In the Lou marriage the family received only 10 out of 23 beasts and in the Dok marriage only 8 out of 22 (the calf received by the master of ceremonies in each case not being included in the reckoning). The uncles and aunts must always be satisfied and their claims settled first, so that if there is to be a loss or debt the family must

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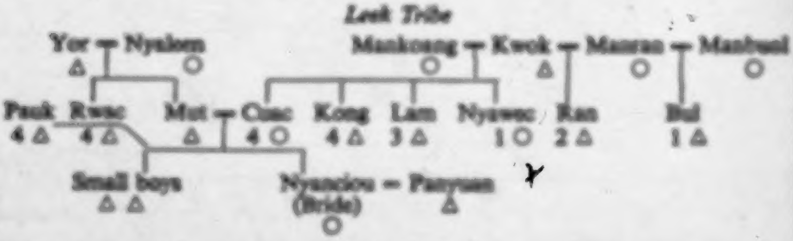
bear it. This conclusion was borne out by records of payments in other marriages.

I now examine in greater detail a payment of 23 beasts in a marriage in the Leek tribe to show the kind of considerations which affect distribution of bridewealth in particular marriages. At the time of my inquiries the marriage had been consummated but a child had not been born.



Pauk, the biological father of the bride, received three beasts in addition to 'the cow of the begetting'. There were two reasons for this generosity: he had brought the bride up from birth, and he was living with her mother and kept his cattle with hers. He was, in fact, acting as husband and father in the bride's family, and since he had no family of his own the bride's small brothers (not named in the chart) were regarded as his heirs. He had begotten them also. So the family received in fact eight beasts and not just the four shown in the chart, which, the father being dead, were allocated to the names of father and mother jointly. It was agreed also that the bride's eldest brother should receive a cow (not listed *in the chart) before the eldest son of Nyanciou's marriage to* Panyuan is initiated. Rwac, the bride's paternal uncle, received in addition to the three animals held to be the right of the paternal uncle in the discussions preceding the marriage a fourth beast, the cow of the paternal aunt, since there was no one standing in this relationship to the bride. This was not an inherited right but a device for ensuring that the father's side to the marriage received their fair quota of cattle. Such adjustments are common in division of bridewealth. In other respects distribution on this occasion was normal and requires no further comment.

It may be noted, however, that though the allocation of cattle was as I have just stated it the full brothers of the bride's mother had not yet received their shares of the bridewealth. The reason for this was that the bride was not living with her paternal kinsmen,

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who took little interest in her, but she and her mother were living in the village of her maternal kinsmen, from which she was married. The paternal kinsmen therefore in this instance received the cattle immediately available for distribution. Had the bride been living with her paternal kin the maternal uncles would not have been so accommodating. It may further be noted that whereas the maternal half-uncles had received their share of the cattle, the senior maternal full uncle had received up to the time when my inquiries were made none of the animals promised to him and the junior maternal full uncle was still owed a heifer. The maternal half-uncles had to be given their shares first because if any debt is incurred it must be borne by those primarily responsible for the marriage agreement and chiefly in control of its arrangements, in this case the bride's full maternal uncles in whose village she was living. The single example I have given will, I hope, be sufficient to show how various circumstances may influence any actual distribution of bridewealth.

IV

In the account I have given of bridewealth it was brought out that there are two connected, but separate, movements in its transfer: the payment by the bridegroom's kin to the bride's kin, and the further division of the cattle among the bride's relations. I feel that it would be profitable here to make some further comments on the first movement in order to elucidate the general functions of bridewealth in Nuer society.

It is no longer necessary to show that the African payment of bridewealth is not a purchase. But to say that it is not price or purchase is not to say that the objects handed over have no significance outside the particular purpose they serve in bringing about a union. Cattle for Nuer are one of the main sources of food and they supply many other domestic requirements, they have a prestige value, and they have religious importance. The payment or receipt of bridewealth changes a man's fortune in a very material way. The bridegroom's family are impoverished, sometimes to the point of privation, though their kinsmen and affines will help them if they reach this point; while in the bride's home the milk-gourds and butter-gourds are full. A man who receives only one cow of the bridewealth has in it the promise of a herd.

583 602 It is for this reason that Nuer found it difficult to understand what I meant when I told them that among my people we marry without paying bridewealth: 'It does not matter. After all, every country has its own customs. But is it right that the father and mother of your wife should go empty-handed when you marry, or is it better that they should be full, that the father should be full and the mother full?' Of the neighbouring Anuak people, who marry with beads and spears, they say: 'Of what use are these things? Can people live on them?' In making their demands on the bridegroom's people the bride's people try to obtain above all lactating cows and their calves or heifers in-calf so that they may enjoy immediate benefit from the transaction.

Nevertheless, Nuer men show greater interest in the bridewealth character of cattle than in their nutritive qualities. It is not that having great nutritive value they acquire through it a general social value, become a standard of worth, and are therefore employed in ritual, for indemnification of injury, and as a means of acquiring a mate. It is rather that their use as bridewealth gives them their supreme value in Nuer eyes. Cattle stand for a wife and are therefore the most important thing in a Nuer's life, because a wife means to him his own home and that he becomes a link in the lineage by fathering a son. Nuer do not grudge the loss of a herd to obtain a wife. They lose cattle, but the wife will bear them daughters at whose marriages the cattle will return, and sons who will herd them.

It is therefore a common-sense inference that payment of bridewealth has a stabilizing action in marriage. If the wife leaves her husband the cattle will have to be returned, and as it would be always unpleasant, and often difficult, to return them it might be supposed that the wife's family will use their influence to make her remain with her husband. There is some truth in this supposition, for Nuer know only too well the confusion, and consequent resentment, that may result from the dissolution of a marriage: 'But with us Nuer, if a wife leaves her husband what will his kinsmen do? For they have given some of the cattle to her paternal uncles, some to her maternal uncles, some to her paternal aunt, and some to her maternal aunt. A wife should be obedient to her husband, for she has been married with cattle.' It must be remembered that not only have the cattle to be returned but their calves also—I have known a divorce in which one of the bridewealth cows

had to be returned with no less than eight calves—and as these 583
may have been widely dispersed much altercation may ensue. 602
Indeed, one of the earliest British officers in Nuerland wrote that 'the system of marriage among the Nuers is the cause of nearly all their quarrels and troubles'.[*] Everyone concerned with the marriage stands to lose by its dissolution and they will try to prevent divorce.

Nevertheless, it can only be accepted that payment of bride- 586
wealth stabilizes marriage to a very limited degree. That this is so 602
can best be understood by considering the question in relation to what happens at divorce. The marriage tie is severed by the return of the bridewealth because either the wife has died childless or her husband's people give up their rights in her. In either case, if there are no children, all the cattle have to be returned, except 'the cow (ox) of the hairs and the cow of the skirts',[†] unless they have died a natural death in the homesteads of the recipients. If the wife dies after bearing a single living child the usual procedure is for the extra-family kinsmen to return their portions of the bridewealth and for the family of the wife to retain their portions, the child remaining with his father. If the wife leaves her husband after the birth of their first-born his kin may decide to claim the return of their bridewealth except for six head of cattle, which the husband leaves with his wife's people to retain his rights in the child (*ruok*). These six beasts, including the two of 'the hairs and the skirts', are kept by the family of the wife. The extra-family kinsmen lose their portions of the bridewealth. The wife by this procedure is divorced and can remarry. On the other hand, they may leave all their cattle with the wife's family and kin and maintain thereby their rights in any children she may 'bear in the bush', that is, by lovers. She is then not divorced, but is only separated, from her husband, and she cannot remarry.

I was told that if a wife dies after having borne two children no cattle are returned, it being held that 'cattle which have children

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[*] Bimbashi H. Gordon, *Sudan Intelligence Reports*, June 1903, No. 107.

[†] According to my own information these two animals are always retained by the bride's parents should the marriage be broken up after the consummation ceremony and are regarded in some part as payment for loss of the bride's maidenhood at the consummation and in some part as compensation for the expenses of the nuptial ceremonies. Mr. H. C. Jackson (*Sudan Notes and Records*, vol. vi, 1923, p. 155) says that they are left with the parents only if the husband is responsible for the dissolution of the marriage. Mr. P. P. Howell tells me that he is of the same opinion as Mr. Jackson.

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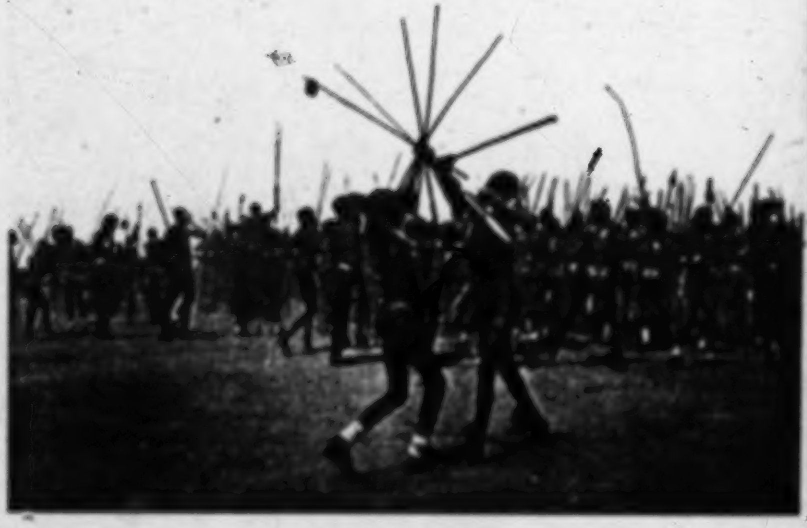

v. Duelling at a dance

[Facing page 92]

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on their backs cannot be returned'. Nuer said that should a wife leave her husband after having borne two children the cattle would remain with her kinsmen and any children she might bear by other men would be claimed by her husband's people. She is still married to him though she lives as concubine to another man. They said that the husband's people would generally be content with this arrangement but, whether content or not, it would be useless for them to ask for return of their cattle and the progeny of these cattle. The wife's people would say to them: 'You have your children. You keep them and we will keep the cattle. Let your wife bear you children in the bush.'

The rules stated above are principles which are flexibly applied according to the circumstances. In cases of divorce much depends on the personal relations between the husband's people and the wife's people. If they are bad and his wife has left him at their instigation, the husband may claim back everything to which he has a right: cattle, sheep, goats, spears, tobacco, millet, and ornaments, including his wife's bead-decorated skirt. But if they are good and she has left her husband against her parents' wishes, he will not ask for the return of the smaller gifts and the *puoth manthude*, the little gifts with which he honoured his mother-in-law; and if she dies childless he may also leave some of the cattle to which he has a right with her parents in the hope that they will later give him her sister in her place, or just from sympathy. If he leaves any of the cattle, preference will be given to the portions of *the spirits and the ghosts*.

Another contingency which is taken into consideration is whether the wife is being sent away by her husband for barrenness or bad habits, which is rare, or whether she is leaving him without his consent and, in this case, whether she has adequate grounds for refusing to live with him, such as neglect or cruelty. Whatever the circumstances are, the husband has a right either to his cattle or to the children his wife may bear to other men, but it sometimes happens that whereas he wants his cattle back to marry again, since he cannot have a home without a wife, the wife's people tell him that he is responsible for the separation and must be satisfied with the children. They would not refuse him his children. If they tell him this—and they would not do so unless she had already borne him a child and had lived in his home—he has to accept their decision. There are no courts he can appeal to

58 and his kinsmen would be unwilling to support him in resort to
62 force. There is nothing he can do. If his wife has gone back to her parents and they do not want to return his cattle they tell him to come and fetch her. But if she is miserable with him she will only run away again, and this time to some distant part of the country. If he complains to her parents they say that it is no affair of theirs. Let him go and get his wife. In the end he will give her up and claim any children she may bear to lovers. There is always a chance that she will come back to him when he takes charge of her sons. I have never known a case in which a wife's parents have refused to return her husband's cattle after they have married her to another man, and when I asked what would happen were they to try to do so, I was told that the husband's kin would undoubtedly use violence to get back their cattle and, in addition, curse the wife so that either she would become barren or her children die. On the other hand, it sometimes happens that the wife's people promise to return the cattle as soon as they are able to do so but fail to return them all, through procrastination on one pretext or another or prevarication, for they may hide some of their cows in the herds of kinsmen in distant districts. If the husband and his wife's father are members of the same local community, difficulties of this kind are not likely to arise and, if they do, they can be settled by discussion and compromise. If the two men belong to different sections of the same tribe, and even more if they belong to different tribes, the dispute, as is the case in all issues of indemnity, is not so easily settled.

We may now consider in the light of these facts to what extent bridewealth may be said to stabilize marriage. Most broken marriages occur during or shortly after the nuptial ceremonies. One cannot properly speak of divorce at this stage because in Nuer eyes marriage is incomplete till a child has been born. That till the birth of a child the wife is considered to belong to her own kin and not to her husband's kin is shown not only in her continuing to live with her parents but in other ways, most noticeably by the fact that the husband is held responsible for her death should she die in her first childbirth. He then has to pay compensation for homicide (*thung yika*). During this period, when the union is looked upon as still only partly formed, the family and kinsmen of the wife do not, if they are wise, disperse the cattle. At this stage, therefore, there is no great difficulty about returning

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the cattle, which are, indeed, kept ready at hand to be returned should the need arise. Also, it must be remembered that the husband is unlikely to have paid all the bridewealth before a child is born.

I cannot give figures, but on the basis of my observations and of my discussions with Nuer on the subject I would say that when marriage has been brought about through the normal negotiations, payments, and ceremonies, divorce after the wife has brought her first child to her husband's home and has lived with him for a year or two is very unusual. Should it take place the wife's family, who alone can bring much pressure to bear on her, do not, with regard to the reduced payments of bridewealth of the present day, stand to lose much, for they will retain six head of cattle. It is the extra-family kinsmen, who have less influence over the wife, who lose all their cattle.

I have never known, or heard of, a case of divorce, or even of separation, after the birth of a second child. My own observations are very limited, but they are supported by the opinion of Nuer that when man and wife have lived together for several years and have children the wife is most unlikely to leave her husband's home while he is alive. Were she to do so the cattle would not, in any case, as I have explained, be returned. After the birth of his second child a husband ceases to keep track of the progeny of his cattle.

It should be noted that it may happen today that all the cattle in the kraal of the wife's father die of rinderpest shortly after the consummation of the marriage. As we have earlier noted, it is then not incumbent on the husband to replace them, or on his father-in-law to return others in their stead if the wife dies or leaves her husband. The wife's people need only return beasts in the place of those which have died after they have transferred them to third parties or which they have butchered. The father-in-law could not in these circumstances break off the marriage and marry his daughter to another man, for the cattle, though dead, are still 'on the wife's back'. When I asked what would happen were he to try to do so, I was told that the husband's kin would claim back their cattle and if necessary use force to obtain them. Should a wife leave her husband in these circumstances the problem of bridewealth would probably be solved by the common Nuer expedient of letting her live as a concubine.

MARRIAGE

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I think it is evident, in view of the facts stated above, that the fear of having to repay bridewealth cannot be said to be a very powerful sanction of the marriage union. Nor is there any evidence of which I am aware that would suggest that the greater the number of cattle handed over the more stable the marriage is likely to prove. Indeed, I am prepared to say definitely that the stability of Nuer marriage rests on quite other foundations than payments of bridewealth: affection between the spouses, the good reputation of the husband, mutual goodwill between the families of husband and wife, especially personal friendship between the fathers or between the husband and his wife's brother, and moral and legal norms.

It is generally safe to assume that when a woman lives with her husband it is because she chooses to do so and is happy in her marriage. By the time a girl is fully married to a man she knows him well. Usually he has courted her before asking for her hand, and she must give her consent before his request is granted. She has plenty of time between the betrothal ceremony and the ceremony of consummation in which to withdraw from the marriage should she be reluctant to complete it, and yet more time between the consummation and the birth of a child. I do not say that pressure may not be put on her by her family to accept her husband, but Nuer girls are not easily coerced. Nuer have good grounds for their assumption that a newly-wed who has borne her husband a child and brought it to his hearth is satisfied with her mate. By the time a second child is born experience has shown that the pair are agreeable to one another also as domestic partners. As Nuer observe a weaning taboo, this means at least three years after the birth of the first child.

Mutual goodwill between the families is also a necessary condition of a successful marriage. Marriage is not only a conjugal relationship but also a set of affinal relations, and it can be stable only if the kin on both sides behave towards the other side in the manner expected of them. This they endeavour to do. A man tries not only to live up to the pattern of what Nuer regard as a good husband but also to be a polite and helpful son-in-law and his wife's family try to act correctly towards him. The relatives on both sides also try to behave towards those on the other side as persons standing in these relationships should do. It is the evocative and inhibitory action of these moral values, sanctioned by

586 approbation and censure, which give stability to marriage and
602 security to the family that derives from it. Divorce is due to failure of one or other of the parties to live up to the code of conduct expected of him or her, and Nuer regard it as a misfortune in which there is also an element of the shameful.

581 Conjugal and affinal relations are personal relationships which
602 require adult adjustment that is not easy. A Nuer regulates his behaviour to the persons around him through kinship values of one kind or another. Owing to the extensive area of kinship covered by Nuer marriage prohibitions, a man cannot marry into a family or lineage with whom he has already close kinship ties. He must therefore marry the daughter of people who are under no obligation to provide him with a wife or, indeed, to assist him in any way. This means forging new social links which by their nature cannot at their inception be of a kinship order. Nuer bridewealth payments are thus complementary to their marriage prohibitions.

Eventually affinal ties are, by slow degrees, transformed, as Nuer themselves say, into kinship ties. The birth of a child gives the wife kinship with her husband's people and the husband kinship with his wife's people. They say that *ruagh*, in-law relation-
583 ship, becomes *mar*, kinship. Bridewealth payments may therefore
602 be viewed as a technique for creating new social relations between persons between whom there are no well-defined patterns of behaviour and for maintaining them. They are one of the many ways in which gifts and payments are used for this purpose, and have this function, in primitive societies. Bridewealth may thus be thought of as providing a kind of social scaffolding, a temporary structure of behaviour patterns, which enables the union to be built up. It ceases to be of any great significance once the new family is firmly established after the birth of the second child.

The payments do not so much give stability to the union of marriage as they are a recognition of its stability. The parents do not accept a suitor unless they are satisfied that he has the qualities of a good husband; and I have shown how the marriage is slowly formed through a series of ceremonies and rites, each marking a stage in the transference of the wife from her own people to her husband's people. Each rite is an acknowledgement that the marriage is a little more stable and complete and compels further payments, which are both an expression on the part of the husband's people of a sense of security and a means of bringing about

the next rite, and through it greater security. When the bride's 583
people consent to hold the next ceremony they express by so doing 602
their confidence in the final outcome. Marriage is not a single act. It is a succession of interconnected acts leading from courtship to the birth of children, and bridewealth is not a single payment but a succession of payments in response to the changing status of the wife and the increasing maturity of the union. As Nuer see it, these payments continue long after the marriage is fully established in the birth of calves and the progeny of these calves and of their progeny, a constant redocumentation which is balanced by the birth of children to the wife and of children to these children.

Bridewealth has so far been viewed as a means of organizing 583
personal relations between the husband and his people on one side 602
and the wife and her people on the other side. It has also a more 613
general structural function. When a woman is married she is transferred from one lineage to another. The husband alone has sex rights in her, but all his brothers and paternal cousins have residual sex rights in her, and his unmarried brothers may benefit from her labour as much as he does. The husband's exclusive marital privilege is recognized in the acknowledgement that he may claim damages for adultery. He has, of course, also rights in any children she may bear, but the children are not only his. They are children of his lineage. The rights of the husband and any of his kin living with him to the domestic services of his wife are evident in the performance of them and in the acceptance that he may correct her should she neglect them.

For the loss of their daughter, or rather of her children, her lineage receive cattle which enable them to obtain a wife from a third lineage to bear them children. When the daughters of these wives are married, the cattle received for them enter the kraals of the lineages to replace those which left them on the marriages of their mothers. In practice the total operation is not as simple as I have stated it because the cattle do not all go to one lineage but are partly distributed among the kinsmen of the bride's father and mother, but this is corrected by the fact that the cattle the father and paternal uncles do not receive on the marriage of their daughter come to them through other marriages in which they stand to the bride in other relationships. Hence it is that Nuer often speak of the lineage marrying a wife with its cattle or giving their daughter in marriage to another lineage for cattle. They say, for example, 583 602 613 that '*cieng* Pual have married a wife', or that '*cieng* Dumien have given their daughter in marriage'.

To understand the functions of bridewealth in Nuer society it is therefore necessary to view its payment in a wider social setting than is provided by any particular marriage. It is necessary to see it, as Nuer themselves do, as a series of transactions, and to perceive furthermore in an exchange of cattle for a wife an exchange
583 681 of a daughter for a wife. Bridewealth may be fruitfully compared from this point of view with bloodwealth, the payment of cattle in compensation for homicide. This is forty head of cattle, the same number as is paid for a bride, and the cattle are divided among the kinsmen of the dead man on the same plan of distribution as that obtaining in the distribution of bridewealth, though about half are reserved for marrying a wife to the name of the dead man to bear him a son. As bridewealth enables a woman to be replaced by a woman so bloodwealth enables a man to be replaced by a man. It is worthy of note that the rate of bloodwealth has fallen in recent times to about the same level as the rate of bridewealth. Nuer see the similarity between them, for I have heard them complain that the government was attempting to fix bloodwealth without fixing bridewealth at the same rate, whereas what the one is the other should be.

583 613 To see the Nuer custom of bridewealth in its structural perspective we must therefore think in terms of lineages. Children are attached by payment of bridewealth to the lineage of their father. They are 'children of the cattle' and therefore of the man in whose name they were paid, and they become joints in his branch of descent. The man in whose name the cattle were paid is always their pater, the legal or lineage father, whether he is their genitor or not. If he dies, the widow should be taken by one of her 'husbands' and the 'fathers' of his sons, that is to say, by one of his brothers. But even should a widow decline to cohabit with one of her husband's paternal kin and prefer to live as a concubine with some man unrelated to her dead husband, any children she may bear are his children. Every child must have a pater or, which is saying the same thing among the Nuer, belong to a lineage, and if an unmarried woman has a child it is legitimatized either by subsequent payment of bridewealth or by payment of a fee.

583 The two most important functions of bridewealth in Nuer society appear to me, therefore, to be its role in creating new social

ties between persons and of regulating the interrelations between 583 these persons till such time as their relationships become assimilated to kinship patterns—broadly speaking its role in the kinship system—and its structural role in interlineage relations.

V

The parents and kin of a young wife scarcely acknowledge her 606 husband's existence until a second child has been born to the union. If there is any need to refer to him they speak of him as *co*, the husband of, followed by his wife's name, and they speak of his village as his wife's village and of his children by reference to her name and not to his. It is also customary for the wife's people to [601] give her children different personal names from those given them by their father's people, and if they address them by an honorific title they use that of their own clan and not that of the husband's clan.

Nevertheless, after the birth of the first child the marriage is held to have become a complete union. The husband has established a kinship tie with his wife's kin, who now address him as father of so-and-so, after the name of his eldest child. He is no longer merely the husband of their daughter. Instead of paying clandestine visits to the home of his parents-in-law (*ciengthu*) he may visit them openly, though he must continue to treat his in-laws, particularly his parents-in-law, with great respect, expressed in formal modes of address, which are reciprocal, and in other ways, most emphatically in the prohibitions on eating in their home and appearing naked before them.

Even before a young man has started to look for a bride he will [576] not generally eat with much senior men, unless they are kin, because one of them might become his father-in-law. Once he has asked for a girl's hand in marriage he may in no circumstances eat in her home, and the prohibition continues, sometimes greatly to his discomfort, until two or three children have been born, when it is relaxed by a formal ceremony if the parties are on good terms with one another. The father-in-law prepares beer, kills a goat or sheep, and invites the son-in-law and his kin to his home to partake of a feast. He tells his son-in-law that there is no need for him to respect his parents-in-law any more. The son-in-law will refuse to eat, however, till compelled to do so by the insistence of his father-in-law's kin and by his father-in-law's gift of a cow, 'the cow of the eating of the husband of a daughter', to *cocangnyade*, his daughter's husband's brother. This ceremony is sometimes held when a young sister of the wife is about to be married, so that her husband may take part in the nuptial feasts. Later, the father-in-law visits the homestead of his daughter's husband's brother and will be given beer and meat. Before he can eat or drink he must be given a bull calf or sheep by the owner of the homestead. His daughter's husband is now said to regard him as a father. Before these payments have been made, a son-in-law is to his father-in-law and his wife's paternal uncles in a position formally like that of the kin of a slayer to the kin of the man he has slain in that they cannot eat in one another's homes. The maternal uncle of a wife, who is also *gwanthu*, his father-in-law, may likewise give her husband's brother a goat to enable the husband to eat in the homes of his wife's maternal kinsmen.

A son-in-law also respects his parents-in-law by hiding his nakedness in their presence with a wild cat's skin from the day he asks for their daughter's hand in marriage till the day his brother receives a cow to enable him to eat in their home. While the prohibition is in force a son-in-law who is living in the same village or camp as his parents-in-law avoids them as far as possible even when he is wearing a skin. A son-in-law must also—at any rate in some parts of Nuerland—wear sandals when visiting his mother-in-law, as he is dangerous to her should he visit her bare-footed and might cause her to become barren. There are various other customs indicating the mother-in-law to son-in-law relationship, such as the obligation on the survivor, should either die, to visit the grave a few days after burial and throw a bracelet on it. Also a son-in-law must not visit his parents-in-law when they are sick, and they must not visit him when he is sick. A man avoids his mother-in-law and her attitude to him is one of shyness and reserve. Unlike fathers-in-law and brothers-in-law, who ask a husband directly for whatever they want, a mother-in-law trusts that her son-in-law will remember her wants or, if in great need, asks him for a gift through her daughter. The mother-in-law relationship among the Nuer is a subject of mirth, and the foulest slips of the tongue are attributed to mothers-in-law when talking to their daughters' husbands.

All these rules regulating the behaviour of a man to his parents-in-law, and the avoidance and the attitude of reserve which accompany them, are eased after the birth of a second child and slowly break down as patterns of affinity change into patterns of kinship, 606 the husband becoming 'the father of our daughter's children' instead of 'our daughter's husband'. A man may even joke with his mother-in-law when there are several children.

The rules about eating and nakedness apply, though in a lesser degree, to kinsfolk of the wife of her parents' generation as well as to the parents themselves, for all her kinsfolk are her husband's in-laws. A man will not appear naked or eat in the homes of his wife's paternal and maternal uncles and aunts or appear naked before the wives of his wife's close kinsmen. I have seen a man's wife's paternal aunt make a great fuss when unintentionally he appeared naked before her. He knelt behind another man to hide his nakedness and receive her reproaches when he became aware of his misdemeanour. On another occasion the fuss was made by a bride's paternal uncle's wife while the astonished bridegroom hastily retired into a hut. Unintentional affronts of this kind are quieted by small payments, such as a spear or a goat. As the genealogical distance from the wife increases, the obligation on the part of her husband to observe these rules lessens. It altogether ceases when the wife's father and maternal uncle have paid beasts to enable him to eat in their homes. Should a divorce take place, the son-in-law at once ceases to treat his in-laws with respect.

The wife's brother and her other kinsmen of his generation are 607 not avoided, but her eldest brother may refrain from eating with the bridegroom before a child has been born. Nuer say, 'the wife's brother is your brother; since he gave you his sister he became your brother', and 'the husband of your sister is your brother because he will get a cow (the *yang waco*) on the marriage of your daughter'. After the birth of children a man and his wife's brother can, if great friends, jokingly curse one another in obscene language. The wife's brother's wife is highly respected till a child has been born, though not to the same extent as the mother-in-law, unless the mother-in-law is dead; then 'she becomes your mother-in-law and must be respected as deeply as a mother-in-law'. Nuer say that she then becomes your real mother-in-law and that '*ce mandong*', 'she has become a grandmother' (to the children of her husband's sister, who call their maternal uncle's wife 'grandmother'). The only in-law whom a man need not at any time treat with reserve is his wife's sister. He can joke with her and even exchange abusive language with her. However, if his mother-in-law

607 is dead he treats her eldest daughter with reserve, for she has then taken her mother's place: 'she has placed the food on the fire' (at her mother's mortuary ceremony). A man and his wife's sister's husband, whom he calls *warombaida*, may be on intimate terms.

602 It is only when the bride is still a maiden that the father and uncles and brothers of the bridegroom are reserved with his parents-in-law. After the marriage is consummated only the husband's father or, if the father is dead, his eldest brother will respect his parents-in-law and only to a small extent, not usually with regard to nakedness and food. Nevertheless, it is customary for the father of the bridegroom to give the father of the bride a spear or goat, and for the father of the bride to make him a similar gift, to enable the two men to eat in one another's homes without shame. A husband's younger brothers do not in any way respect his in-laws and they eat and go naked in their homesteads. On the other hand, it is customary, at any rate in the Lou tribal area, for the youth who acted as the husband's best man in the marriage ceremonies to respect his in-laws till they give him a goat to break down his reserve.

606 Obviously a wife is in a different position *vis-à-vis* her husband's people from that of a husband *vis-à-vis* his wife's people. Nevertheless, while avoidance is impracticable, she treats her parents-in-law with great respect, and in the early days of her marriage she keeps herself apart from them as much as domestic requirements permit. She cannot eat with her mother-in-law, and this prohibition may continue for some years after the birth of her first child. She cannot eat in her husband's home at all before the birth of her first child, and even after this event, when she has come to live with him, she ought not to see him eat or be seen eating by him. However, the inconvenience of this prohibition is evident, and soon after she has taken up residence in her husband's home it will be arranged that her husband enters as though by accident a hut in which she is eating. After this it is no longer shameful for husband and wife to see one another eating, and though the wife is at first shy, she will eventually share her husband's meal when 607 they are alone. Before the birth of her first child a woman respects her husband's sisters and will not eat out of the same dish with them. After the birth of a child she can be on free and easy terms with them, though personal difficulties sometimes make for reserve. Should the mother be dead, her eldest daughter tends to

take her place in the family, and this affects her relationship to her 607 brother's wife.

Just as a husband need not respect his wife's sisters but is on familiar terms with them, so a wife is on familiar terms with her husband's brothers. Among brothers the wife of one is in a general social sense the wife of all. A man seldom refers to his brother's wife as *'ciekdemar'*, 'the wife of my brother', but as *'ciekgoala'*, 'the wife of my home', and she refers to him as *'gwangaanko'*, 'the father of our children.' Another word a wife uses to refer to her husband's brothers (mostly for his younger brothers), and also for his paternal cousins, is *'cocangda'*, which seems to mean 'my husband of the daytime' as distinct from the husband of the night, the real husband, for Nuer say that *'corar gule, cowar gule'*, 'the husband of the outside is different, the husband of the night is different'.* Here again, though relations between a wife and her husband's brothers are free and easy, should her father-in-law be dead the eldest brother takes his place as head of the family and must be treated with deference. When she has borne several children she and her husband's brothers and paternal cousins may curse each other in foul language. In the horseplay which takes place on the day boys are initiated and on the day initiates pass out of seclusion it is the *cocangda*, generally a paternal cousin of the husband, who lifts up the skirt of the mother of an initiate and spits and utters a cry.

A woman enters her husband's home as a wife of the home. She 601 also enters it as the mother of a child of her husband's lineage, and this is emphasized by the usual teknonymous mode of address for a married woman in her husband's community—mother of so-and-so, after the name of her eldest child, the link which joins her to her husband's lineage—in contrast to the patronymic mode of address for the husband—son of so-and-so, after the name of his father, his link with his lineage. Through the child she has kinship with the people of the home of her adoption by marriage. *'Jigoala'*, 'people of my home', a woman's favourite ejaculation, is the term by which she refers collectively to the domestic society of which she regards herself as a member. The expression was constantly on her lips before marriage in reference to her paternal family and kin. When she comes to live with her husband it is still constantly

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* However, Father Kiggen (*Nuer-English Dictionary*, 1948, p. 63) gives *cowciang*, a formation which would not bear the same literal meaning as *cocang*.

601 on her lips, but then it means the people of her husband's home, for they have become her people, and she now identifies herself with them and not with her father's people. She uses in speaking to her husband's kin the same terms of address as he uses.

602 613 When a woman joins her husband she comes under the protection of his lineage spirits and ancestral ghosts, and when she builds a mud windscreen they are summoned by her husband's father to come and abide there. On the day she constructs it her father-in-law pours over it beer and butter and utters some of the pious formulae spoken on such occasions. When beer is brewed the wife pours a little at the side of the windscreen, and a sacrificial goat or sheep is often tethered there for the ghosts to see it before it is killed. When the woman who owns the hut has a grandchild, a *gatnyade*, a son of her daughter, she sends for the boy to come and break down her windscreen and sacrifice a goat. Since a wife is accepted by the ghosts and spirits of her husband's lineage, she may perform ritual for that lineage in which invocation of its ghosts and spirits forms part.

But though a woman joins her husband's group and becomes part of it, she never entirely ceases to belong to her own family and lineage, under the protection of whose ghosts and spirits she remains. If she is ill treated by her husband she will ask her father and uncles and brothers to help her. On the other hand, should she in a quarrel with her husband disfigure him—knock a tooth out, for example—her father must pay him compensation. I have myself on two occasions seen a father pay a heifer to his son-in-law to atone for insults hurled at the husband's head by his wife when irritated by accusations of adultery.

602 I have given a short account of the conventional attitudes and patterns of behaviour Nuer regard as proper between relations-in-law. I repeat that for Nuer the relationships which contain these attitudes and patterns change in course of time into a kind of kin-relationship through the children to the marriage, and they might then perhaps be best described as kinship-in-law.

VI

601 So far I have been speaking about normal matrimony, the usual domestic union in Nuer society. There are, however, other forms of domestic union among the Nuer of which I now give an account.

I presented in Chapter I some genealogical tables to illustrate

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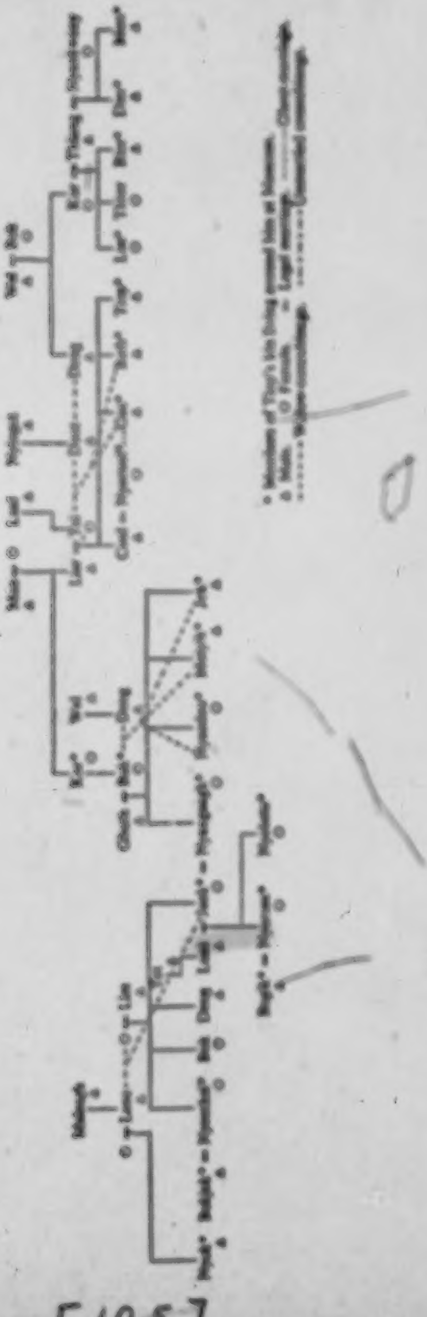

[105]

601 the network of kinship ties we find in any local community of Nuerland. Though these tables were simplified, they showed some of the different domestic unions which I am about to describe. Before doing so, and in order that their significance in the networks of kinship ties to which I have referred may be better appreciated, I subject another configuration of kin to the scrutiny of a more powerful lens than that used in the examination of the earlier specimens. The diagram above, and a brief commentary on it, reveal some of the complications these forms of union make in kinship relations. The people figured in it were living in 1935 in the Eastern Jikany village of Mancom, a large settlement, containing a high proportion of persons of Dinka descent, at the mouth of the Nyanding river. I spent over a month there in the rains of that year because it was the home of Tiop-Lier, a youth whom I knew well and who was at the time acting as my cook. His relatives made me welcome on his account.

I made an investigation into the kinship structure of the village, but I purpose here only to give a brief account of Tiop's own home, the immediate companions of his daily life. Lier, Tiop's pater, was a Luac Dinka. He married Tai, who bore him a son Caol, who died from the bite of a snake while still a boy. After her husband's death Tai went to live with a man called Duot. Duot and Lier are known to have been distantly related through their mothers, being *ram kene gatmanlen*, a man and his mother's sister's son (in a classificatory sense), but Tiop and his brothers were unable to trace the relationship between them with genealogical precision. By Duot, Tai bore two sons, Gac and Bath. Between the births, however, Tai had a disagreement with her lover and went to live for a time with a man called Deng-Wel, at present living in the interior of Lou country, by whom she bore my friend Tiop. Gac, the eldest of the three brothers, had recently married a wife, Nyacuol, to the name of his dead paternal half-brother Caol. It had been arranged that when Bath marries he is to take a wife to the name of his dead genitor Duot.

Tiop, through whose eyes I saw the social world around us at Mancom, had come to live there to be near his natural wac, his genitor's sister, Kur (since dead) and her sons, and in 1935 he and his brother Bath were sharing a byre with Dier and Mun, the sons of her co-wife. Tiop and Bath called these youths '*gaatwacda*', 'sons of my paternal aunt', and they called Tiop and Bath *'gaatnara'*, 'sons of my maternal uncle', though in the usual Nuer fashion they all addressed each other as *'demar'*, 'my mother's son'. Later Tiop brought to live at Mancom his legal *wac*, his pater's sister, also called Kur, from Lak tribal country. This Kur had a daughter called Buk who had married a husband, Ghoth, and had borne him a daughter, Nyangaagh, before leaving him on account of ill treatment to go to live in the country of the Luac Dinka from which her mother's people had originally come. There she lived as concubine to Deng Wol, to whom she bore a daughter and two sons. All efforts by her husband to secure her return failed, and though he seized Nyangaagh and brought her back to his home she ran away and returned to her mother. Later, in a year of famine, Tiop's brother Gac brought Kur and her daughter Buk and Buk's children to live at Mancom. Ghoth contented himself by taking the cattle on the father's side on the marriages of Buk's daughters. 601

The eldest of them, Nyangaagh, was married by a woman, Jaak-Lim, to the name of her dead brother. The father of Jaak-Lim had two daughters at the time of his death, Buk and Nyanthal. His widow became concubine to Leau-Maleagh, to whom she bore a third daughter Jaak who, as already stated, married Nyangaagh, Tiop's *nyanyemar*, paternal aunt's daughter's daughter. Jaak had herself been previously married to Luak-Tot and had borne him two children before his death. She called in Nyok, the son of her genitor, to give her, or rather to give her dead brother, children by Nyangaagh.

It will thus be seen that to Tiop and his brothers the immediate and intimate circle of kinsmen among whom they live and share their daily experience are the clusters of kin around their paternal aunt Kur and Tiop's natural paternal aunt of the same name. It is for this reason that in giving me the connexions of his family Tiop always stressed the female links which united him to those around him and neglected the names of the husbands of these women, for they had little interest for him.

The genealogical chart of Tiop's immediate social milieu[1] contains examples of several different types of union other than matrimony in the ordinary sense, ghost-marriage, widow-concubinage, woman-marriage, and a variety of unmarried concubinage, and will serve as a starting-point for an examination of these diverse unions which have so important a place in the social life of the Nuer. 601 588

[1] [in orig. txt, p. 106 -- Analyst]

MARRIAGE

581 The ordinary Nuer marriage is a union such as we understand matrimony to be in our own civilization, with this difference perhaps, that the Nuer do not consider the union to be complete till a child is born to it. As we have seen, a Nuer union of this kind is instituted by payment of cattle and the performance of nuptial ceremonies. It is to this type of union that I refer when I speak of marriage without qualifications; and when I use the word family in an unqualified sense I refer to the partners to such a union and the children born to the wife in the union (but not necessarily begotten by the husband). However, since the terms marriage and family are also used in this book in a qualified sense to refer to other unions and groups, I sometimes speak of a simple legal marriage and a simple legal family to avoid confusion or to point a contrast.

595 When a man marries two or more women there results a complex legal family, which we call a polygamous family, in which are comprised several simple legal marriages with the male partner the same in all of them. I discuss some of the features of polygamous marriages and families in the following chapter.[1] They present no immediate difficulties.

588 What seems to us, but not at all to Nuer, a somewhat strange union is that in which a woman marries another woman and counts as the pater of the children born of the wife. Such marriages are by no means uncommon in Nuerland, and they must be regarded as a form of simple legal marriage, for the woman-husband marries her wife in exactly the same way as a man marries a woman. When the marriage rites have been completed the husband gets a male kinsman or friend or neighbour, sometimes a poor Dinka, to beget children by her wife and to assist, regularly or when assistance is particularly required, in those tasks of the home for the carrying out of which a man is necessary. When the daughters of the marriage are married he will receive for each a 'cow of the begetting' and more beasts if he has played any considerable part in the maintenance of the home. We may perhaps refer to this kind of union as woman-marriage.

A woman who marries in this way is generally barren, and for this reason counts in some respects as a man. She acquires cattle through the marriages of kinswomen, including some of those due to uncles on the marriage of a niece, or by inheritance, since she counts as a man in these matters. A barren woman also often

[1] [cf. chap. vi, pp. 127 ff. -- [illegible] (108)]

practises as a magician or diviner and thereby acquires further cattle; and if she is rich she may marry several wives. She is their legal husband and can demand damages if they have relations with men without her consent. She is also the pater of their children, and on the marriages of their daughters she receives 'the cattle of the father', and her brothers and sisters receive the other cattle which go to the father's side in the distribution of bridewealth. Her children are called after her, as though she were a man, and I was told that they address her as 'father'. She administers her home and herd as a man would do, being treated by her wives and children with the deference they would show to a male husband and father. 588

A very common feature of Nuer social life is a union I have called ghost-marriage. If a man dies without legal male heirs, a kinsman of his or the succeeding generation—brother, natural son, paternal nephew, or, where a man has, in the absence of lineal heirs, inherited cattle from his mother's brother, sister's son—ought to take a wife to his name.

Except in the case of a barren woman and in the special circumstances and manner mentioned on page 16, where it might be said that in a sense she does so, a daughter does not carry on the lineage of her father. She becomes one of her husband's people and her children belong to his lineage. Hence Nuer say: *'Nyal, mo ram me gwagh'*, 'A daughter, that is an unrelated person.' As the Roman lawyers put it, she is *finis familiae*, the terminus of the family. But a man's name must continue in his lineage, and Nuer consider it very wrong if a man who dies without male heirs is not married a wife by a kinsman who will raise up seed to him by her so that he will be remembered in his sons. This is a most elementary obligation of kinship, and if it is neglected the dead man's ghost may haunt his kin. 611

In speaking of these ghost-marriages Nuer say, for example, that *'ce deman kwen ciek'*, 'he-his brother-married-wife' ('he married his brother a wife'). This is a clumsy and ambiguous expression in English, so I shall speak of a man marrying a wife to the name of a dead kinsman, it being understood that it is not he, but the dead man, who is the legal husband. Nuer also speak of a man 'kindling the fire' of his dead kinsman, a euphemism for raising up seed to him. 588

This is a vicarious marriage, the vicarious husband acting as

588 though he were the true husband in the marriage ceremonies and afterwards in cohabitation and domestic life. In all but the strict legal sense he counts as husband and father in the family. He has the same legal rights over the wife as her husband would have were he alive, and he exercises the same authority over the children when they are minors as their pater would do. While the children are small, at any rate, one cannot observe any difference in sentiment and behaviour between a ghost-family and a simple legal family. It is only when the sons grow up that their connexion with their pater becomes significant. In everyday usage people speak of the living man as though he were the true husband and father, so that it is only by inquiring that one discovers the name of the true husband. The name of the pater looms larger when the children grow up, and Nuer told me that it is his name which finally survives in the genealogy of the lineage; but when the pater and the genitor are agnatic kin it is by reference to the name of the genitor that the children will be addressed, except in certain legal and ceremonial situations when it is desired to indicate their correct genealogical position. A child always knows the name of his pater.

Nevertheless, the legal partners to the union are not the man and woman living together. The legal husband is the ghost in whose name the bridewealth was paid and the ritual of matrimony was performed. The woman is *ciekjooka*, the wife of a ghost, and her children are *gaatjooka*, children of a ghost. The family that develops out of a ghost-marriage may be called a ghost-family in acknowledgement of the ghostly status of the pater of the children. It consists of a ghost, his wife, his children born in the union of marriage, and the kinsman who begat these children and acts as father to them. It is a variety of the simple legal family, which is contained in its structure. This is why, Nuer say, a man may not marry a wife to the name of a kinsman of a younger generation, for such a marriage would mean that the wife would cohabit with a man who was her father-in-law.

These ghost-marriages must be almost as numerous as simple legal marriages. Not only do many youths die before marriage but for one reason or another married men do not always have male heirs. A man's wife may bear him only daughters or her sons may die before marriage. In this last eventuality, his kinsmen must raise up seed not only to him but to his sons also, unless they died in childhood. A very common circumstance is that a man takes a

wife to the name of a dead kinsman and is unable later to marry a 588
wife in his own right, for, seeing that he enjoys the material benefits of marriage, his younger brothers must be allowed to marry from the family herd before he can contract a second, and legal, marriage. If he is ever rich enough to marry again he may feel that he must forgo the privilege in the interests of the sons he has raised up to his dead kinsman. He thus dies legally childless and it will be the duty of one of these sons to marry a wife to his name. In a case of this kind, it is more than ever incumbent on his sons to marry a wife to his name because he has died in possession of cattle. These cattle, *ghok jookni*, cattle of the ghosts, are sacred and in the special circumstances ought not to be used for any purpose other than marrying a wife to the name of their dead owner. When Nuer raid a herd to seize cattle in compensation for some injury they will not take cattle reserved for the marriage of a ghost.

Except in the circumstances I have just related, it is usually a younger brother who marries a wife to the dead. As brothers [582] marry in order of seniority, it is fitting that when it comes to the turn of the dead man to take a wife the brother next junior to him should marry in his name. However, if the next brother is only a paternal half-brother they are likely to leave the pious obligation to a full brother who is yet younger.

The custom of marrying a wife to the name of a dead man makes obvious complications in the kinship system of the Nuer, for a child of the union is both a son of the man who is in the place of his pater and, in virtue of his attachment to his pater, stands also to him in a different relationship: father's brother's son, brother, brother's son, or maternal uncle's son.

A further complication arises when, as occasionally happens, a woman marries a wife to the name of a dead kinsman, usually of a dead uterine brother. It is said: '*Ce vode kwen ciek, ciek thok dwiel man*', 'She has taken a wife to herself, a wife for the hut of her mother', that is to say, for her uterine brother. The persons involved in a marriage of this kind are the dead man, his kinswoman who marries a wife to his name, the wife, and the man who is brought in to cohabit with the wife. A woman may instead marry a wife herself and instruct the son of this marriage to marry a wife, when he grows up, for her brother (his paternal uncle, since the sister is his pater).

583 Yet more rarely a man marries a wife to the name of a dead sister or other kinswoman who was barren in her life, 'for she then counts as a man'. This is perhaps only done when the dead woman's ghost causes sickness to draw attention to her unhappy condition. The children are called after their female pater, and her brother, who has married their mother to her name, counts as their paternal uncle, 'for his sister has become his brother'. On the marriage of the daughters he gets the cattle due to a paternal uncle. It seems that he must not cohabit with the wife himself, because in these circumstances 'your wife is like your sister' (she stands in the place of your sister), but must arrange for a stranger, perhaps a Dinka, to cohabit with her in the hut he builds for her in his homestead.

587 Another type of union, and one that might be expected in a society which has ghost-marriage, is the levirate. Among many African peoples a widow is inherited by her dead husband's brother or son and becomes his wife. This is not the case among the Nuer. With them the bonds of marriage are not severed at death. The widow remains the wife of her dead husband, and any children she may bear after his death, by whomsoever they are begotten, count as his children. Hence Nuer never allow one to use the word *kuen*, to marry, in reference to the taking of a deceased brother's wife. They themselves usually say of the brother that '*ce ciekdemen lath dwil*', 'he has provided his brother's wife with a hut'. She is still the wife of her dead husband and therefore cannot be remarried. Indeed, I found great difficulty in making the Nuer understand that in our country it is possible for a widow to remarry.

The levir is normally a brother, and a brother is the most approved substitute for the dead man. If a young man dies his sons would not be old enough to take his widow, and he is most unlikely in any case to have another wife than their mother. When an old man with several wives dies, the wives, being as a rule senior women, may be past child-bearing and therefore wish to live with their children, or they may prefer to lead an independent life with lovers than to live with a kinsman of the husband. It is only when an old man dies who has lately married a young wife, who has not yet borne a child or has borne a single child, that a son takes his father's wife. By this time all the father's brothers will have married; and it was probably understood at the time of the old

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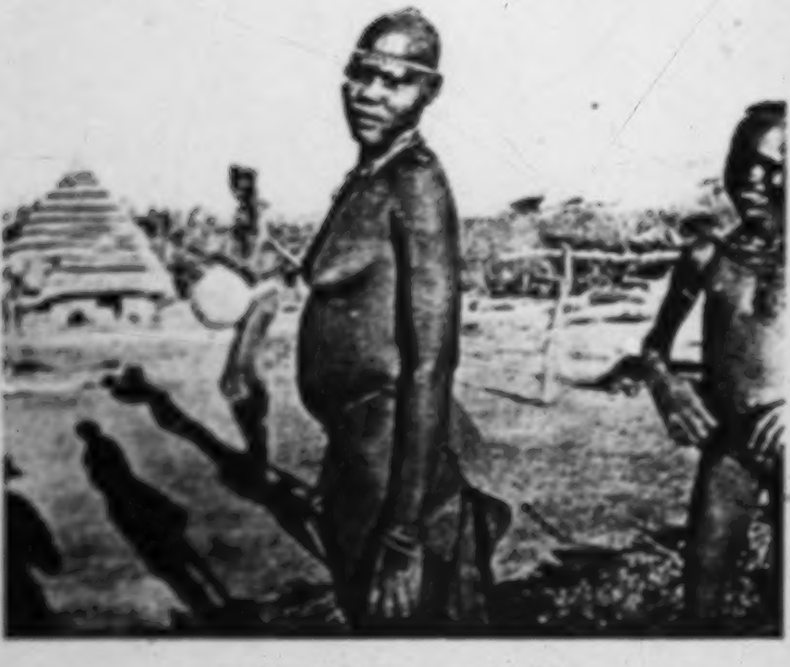


vi. A married woman, wearing skirt
In the background a man plays on a harp

[Facing p. 112]

587 man's marriage that he was taking the girl to wife for one of his sons. It is certainly rare today for a son to take his father's wife. I was told also that it very occasionally happens that a sister's son takes his mother's brother's widow. Sometimes a paternal cousin of some degree takes the widow. This may be regarded as coming within the idea of the levirate, and Nuer so speak of it. But it rarely happens, and when it happens the union, in fact, partakes more of the nature of concubinage than of leviratic marriage. A brother, especially a full brother, ought to be the levir, and if any of the brothers are unmarried their rights are paramount. So, bearing in mind these rare exceptions, we may use the term levirate in its classical sense.

Leviratic marriage is very different from ghost-marriage. In a ghost-marriage the vicarious husband actually marries the wife in the sense that he pays the cattle and performs the rites of marriage, even though in the name of another. In leviratic marriage the legal husband has performed these actions himself and the brother merely enters as pro-husband a family already in being. The widow is always referred to as the wife of the dead man and not as the pro-husband's wife, as she generally is in ghost-marriage. Moreover, the children clearly regard themselves as members of a legal family to which the brother of their pater does not belong, although he is their foster-father and may also be their genitor. He may be opposed by the sons when they grow up.

It is true that the brother is the accepted guardian of his dead brother's children, and if he enters into a leviratic union with the widow he has in it the status of legal representative of the husband, so that he can demand compensation if anyone commits adultery with her. He can also, in certain circumstances, as I will explain, divorce her. To this extent leviratic marriage must be regarded as a variety of legal marriage, the simple legal family being contained in its structure as it is in the structure of the ghost-family. But it is also true that, in practice, the pro-husband in leviratic marriage has far less control over his partner than the pro-husband in ghost-marriage; and a widow in Nuer leviratic marriage is much freer than an inherited widow in other African societies. Her favourable position is due to the rule by which a widow is still married to her dead husband, for after his death she can continue to perform her reproductive obligations to his lineage by bearing him children as well by a stranger as by one of his

587 brothers, and as well in the home of a stranger as in the home of her husband's kin. If she has children begotten by her husband, her domestic duties to her husband's people are adequately performed by her services to his children. In these circumstances the husband's kin must give her her freedom.

Briefly, the position is this. A woman is married not simply by her husband but by his brothers as well, since she is married with the cattle of their common herd. Consequently, if her husband dies, his brothers expect to exercise their rights in her, and if she is young and some of the brothers are unmarried they may insist on them to the point of dissolving the marriage if they are denied them. In practice, a young widow generally consents to live with one of her husband's younger unmarried brothers. Tradition, good form, and the threat of divorce are powerful sanctions to conformity in this matter, though these influences are not so strong in the case of a paternal half-brother as in the case of a full brother. After the death of a man the children of each of his wives often live with their mothers as largely independent units, each mother looking after the home of her children. If the mother is dead and the eldest son of the hut is married, his younger brothers and his unmarried sisters group themselves round his home, where his wife cooks for them and milks their cows. She takes the place of the mother. Unmarried youths are then dependent on the wife of a full brother for daily necessities, and if he dies and she does not consent to live with one of them, they lose not only a mate but also a housekeeper, cook, dairy-maid, and gardener. They therefore strongly object to her going to live with a lover, especially a lover in a different village. If they are on good terms with their half-brothers they will not resist the widow's desire to live with one of them, but will group themselves around the half-brother whom she chooses, and share his byre and the domestic services of their dead brother's wife in his homestead. If they are not on good terms with their half-brothers they may out of spite tell her, if she refuses to live with one of themselves, to go and bear children by a stranger. Much depends on the strength of family sentiment in any particular case. A full brother has strongest claims on the widow and the strongest feelings of obligation to the dead and his family, and he is therefore likely to oppose her, should she wish to take a lover, more strongly than half-brothers and paternal cousins would do, for their claims are weaker and they have less personal

interest in the family of the dead, sometimes caring little with 587
whom the widow lives so long as they get their shares of the bridewealth of her daughters.

One finds that, in practice, a young widow who has borne her 589
husband a single child sometimes lives with strangers. The husband's kin try to persuade her to live with a brother, but if they fail, they often, especially in eastern Nuerland, reconcile themselves to her obduracy, though they may insist that she continues to live in their village, as a member of their home, and there bear children to her dead husband by a lover. If she refuses this stipulation they can divorce her, leaving with her parents six head of the bridewealth cattle to retain their rights in the child. If she agrees to it they have few grounds for complaint. The children she bears by a lover are not only their kin but they are born amidst them and reared by them, and the lover not only begets children for them but also acts as their protector and breadwinner if he is a member of the village, or frequently visits the mother to assist her in gardening if he lives in a neighbouring village.

The position of a widow who has borne her husband two or more children is different. The return of her bridewealth cannot in any case be demanded: '*Ghok te jokdien ka nath ca ka de lony*', 'Cattle which have people (children) on their backs cannot be loosened (returned).' In these circumstances a woman is free to live where and with whom she pleases, and in fact many Nuer widows of this seniority do not live with kinsmen of their dead husbands but 'give birth in the bush' ('*dieth dor*'), as the Nuer say. Wherever a widow lives and by whomsoever her children are begotten, they are all children of the dead husband and their kin will claim them sooner or later. When she is old and past child-bearing she will probably return to her husband's home to be with her grown-up sons. A widow who has grown-up children at the time of her husband's death will not want to take a lover. She will choose to live with one of her children.

A widow is asked to make her choice at her husband's mortuary ceremony. The kin are not likely to challenge her decision on this solemn occasion. If she refuses the brothers and sons of her husband, they ask her whether she wishes to take a lover away from their village (*lum dor*) or to take a lover in the village (*lum cieng*). They hope that she will choose the latter alternative. However, widows often elect to return to their paternal homes and there take

589 lovers, so that, as we have earlier noted, it often comes about that children are brought up among their maternal kin. Many widows neither remain for long in the homes of their dead husbands nor in the homes of their own kinsfolk, but after a while go to live with lovers, sometimes in different districts and even in different tribal areas. Relations between a widow and her lover tend to be unstable, and she often abandons one lover to take another. She may wander from place to place. If her children by her husband are small she takes them with her, so during childhood they are members of the households of her lovers, who act as their foster-fathers. Thus a widow may go to live with a lover accompanied by children begotten both by her husband and by former lovers. Some old widows, long past child-bearing, live with men to cook for them, the man having no wife and the widow no adult children to look after her.

588 When a widow lives with a man who is not of her husband's kin we have a different kind of union to that of leviratic marriage. Indeed, it cannot be regarded as marriage in any sense, but must be regarded as a form of concubinage. I call it widow-concubinage. A widow-concubine—that is to say, a widow who takes a stranger for a lover—is called in Nuer a *ciek ma lak*, and a child of such a union is called a *gat lake*, a child of concubinage. The structure of the original simple legal family remains unimpaired, however much the configuration of the household may change: it consists throughout of the wife, the husband who married her with cattle, and the children of the wife. Whoever begets these children, their pater is the husband of their mother. The concubinous does not stand in the place of the husband and has therefore no authority over the wife. He cannot compel her to live with him—she goes from man to man or has a succession of lovers in her own home as she feels inclined—and he has no redress if she has relations with other men while she is living with him. His position is thus very different from that of a man living in leviratic marriage. Likewise, he has no legal control over the children, who can be taken away from him by the kin of their pater whenever they choose to remove them. He is only their genitor, and his sole right in them lies in the obligation of their paternal kin to pay him a 'cow of the begetting' when each of his natural daughters by the widow is married. His position in this respect also is very different from that of a levir. A brother stands in the place of the pater, a lover

does not. Consequently the group that results from the union of 588 widow-concubinage, when children are born of it, must be regarded as a natural family and not, as in the cases we have hitherto been considering, a variant of the legal family.

There is another kind of domestic union to which I must allude in this place, because it corresponds to widow-concubinage in all respects but one: that the wife is not a widow. A man marries a wife who for some reason is not content to remain with him after she has borne him a child, and she leaves him. Her family are not prepared to pay back to the husband's people the cattle they have received from them, either because they cannot do so or because they consider that the breach is the husband's fault and not their responsibility. They tell the husband to let their daughter bear him children 'in the bush'. He may then have to acquiesce in his wife living with another man in some distant village. He is in any case the pater of any children she may bear to other men. She is still his wife, since his cattle are 'on her back', but nevertheless he cannot claim compensation for adultery, for she is living apart from him in circumstances which may not have his approval but which he has perforce to accept. The union between his wife and her lover can be classed as a variety of widow-concubinage, though Nuer tend to speak of her as a simple concubine.

In all the forms of union I have so far described—simple legal marriage, woman-marriage, ghost-marriage, leviratic marriage, and widow-concubinage—the woman is always legally married and all her children belong in virtue of her marriage to her husband's lineage. I now describe a type of union in which the mother is not married to any man, and which may perhaps be called unmarried concubinage or simple concubinage. A girl is dissatisfied with the man to whom she has been espoused and provokes a divorce, if such it can be called, before she has borne a child. This may happen a second time with a second husband, and her parents, finding that they cannot control their daughter, let her do as she pleases. This may mean allowing her to live with a man of whom she is fond but who cannot, or will not, marry her with cattle. Other women of this category are those who have borne children while maidens and have never afterwards been married. An unmarried concubine is called by Nuer a *ciek me keagh*, and a child by her is known as a *gat keaka*. Their definition of her status is that 'she has no cattle on her back'. 'A *keagh* is a woman

588 from whose back cattle have been returned.' Either the cattle paid for her have been sent back to her husband's people or she was not at any time married with cattle. These concubines often spend a few years with one lover and then a few years with another. They move from village to village, taking their infants with them. I found unmarried mothers in every Nuer village where I made inquiries; and I have known an unmarried concubine bear eight children by as many as seven different men.

Those unmarried concubines whom I have known personally have been women of strong character who valued their independence and did not desire matrimony. Nuer recognize that they are temperamentally unfit for normal married life and are unlikely to [848] settle down till they are old. Their behaviour is not stigmatized as immoral, but they are not so highly esteemed as wives and in a quarrel their children may suffer the reproach of bastardy. Also, an unmarried concubine cannot expect the same support from her kinsmen in domestic disputes as a wife can expect. What a wife can demand as a right, a concubine can only ask as a privilege. It does not follow that a man treats a concubine differently to a wife, and one cannot know in a household who is wife and who is concubine by bare observation of behaviour. Indeed, a man may treat a concubine with more consideration than a wife, for he has only what control over her his personal influence gives him. He cannot claim compensation should she be unfaithful to him, and he cannot restrain her should she wish to leave him for a new lover.

588 848 He has, however, undisputed right to legitimatize any children she may bear him by paying for each child a fee of from four to six head of cattle to her parents—they are not divided among the kin. This fee (*ruok*) is not bridewealth. It gives him no rights in the woman nor in any further children she may bear to him or to other men. Children born of a concubine by different men become in consequence members of different lineages. If a concubine leaves one lover to live with another she takes her small children by the first with her to the second, but they will eventually be claimed by the man who by payment of cattle is their pater. By payment of a fee the genitor becomes the pater also.

588 It is, of course, possible for a man to legitimatize his union with a concubine by payment of bridewealth, but though he will almost invariably legitimatize his children, he is seldom eager to marry their mother, because experience has taught Nuer that a woman

who leaves one man is likely to leave another. However, some 588 women become concubines through misfortune, and not by choice, and are not unsuited or averse to the married state. A girl becomes pregnant in courtship and her swain has no cattle with which to marry her, or a young mother, unhappy when she comes to live in her husband's home, runs away from him and her bridewealth is returned. In such circumstances a lover may well be prepared to pay bridewealth for her, though fewer cattle than he would pay for a maiden, and to go through the nuptial rites with her, so that he may have full legal rights in her and in all children she has borne or may bear to him or to any other man. The *ciek ma keagh*, unmarried concubine, then becomes *ciek pany*, a true wife. It sometimes happens too that a youth makes a girl pregnant and would like to marry her but has insufficient cattle. He pays what cattle he can get together, and the girl's people let him take her on the promise that he will pay the rest when he is able to do so; but they refuse to solemnize the marriage, so she is regarded as a sort of concubine. The marriage rites may not be performed till years afterwards, sometimes not till just before the marriage of her eldest daughter. Then the wedding dance is held and the cattle are blessed to make an honest woman of her, as we would say. Till then she can only be described as half-concubine, half-wife.

We may perhaps speak of an unmarried woman, the man with 588
whom she lives, and the children she bears to him in his home as 594
a simple natural family in contrast to a simple legal family. We cannot deny that this group is some kind of family, for its members live together in a common household on the pattern of a simple legal family, at any rate for some years. But whereas in the simple legal family the tie between pater and child is derived from the tie between husband and wife created by payment of bridewealth, in the simple natural family it is a direct tie created by payment of cattle for the child and not for the mother. We may compare the simple natural family also with the kind of family that springs from widow-concubinage. This last is a complex group in that the woman and the children she bears to her lover belong not only to the natural family of a man, his mate, and their children, but to a different, and legal, family as well. The genitor can never pay a fee to become pater of his natural children. When a man begets children by an unmarried woman there is no

588 legal family in opposition to this natural family and the genitor
594 can become pater to the children. If the woman leaves him, his position is then equivalent to that of a man who has divorced his wife, but has left part of the bridewealth with her family to retain his children.

842 It is clear from the facts I have recorded that Nuer do not attach great importance to physiological paternity. Men prefer to beget their own sons, but it is not ignominious to nurture children begotten by others. Nuer pay little regard to the manner of begetting so long as the legal fatherhood of the child is well established. This is particularly evident in their ideas about adultery, and a consideration of them will serve also to emphasize that Nuer acknowledge social and mystical links between a child and his natural father.

837 It is adultery if a man has relations with another man's wife, including ghost-wives and leviratic wives. I was struck among the Nuer both by the frequency of adultery and the infrequency of quarrels or even talk about it. Nuer seem to treat the matter lightheartedly, and not to be at all ashamed of their adulteries. In speaking of adultery, it is the risk of being speared or clubbed if caught in the act, or having to pay compensation to the husband if he finds out what is happening, that they bring to the fore. Adultery in their eyes is an illegal but not an immoral act.

684 The legal position is as follows. When a husband has proof of his wife's infidelity he may claim compensation of six cows and, as the adulterer's kin are unlikely to support him, the husband will probably, if the two men live in the same district, receive the cattle. Nuer regard adultery in the husband's home as a more serious offence than adultery in the bush because they believe that it is more likely to cause the husband sickness. Adultery is a double damage: it is an infringement of rights and it can injure the husband's health.

If after the six head of cattle have been paid a healthy child is born of the adulterous congress, five of them must be returned, because 'the cattle and the child must not meet in one place'. Otherwise, the cattle paid in compensation partake of the nature of a legitimatization fee and hence give the genitor a claim on the child. The birth of a child seems to be thought to change the compensation for an adultery (*ruok*) into a fee for legitimatizing a child (also *ruok*). I only discovered this convention after I had left eastern Nuerland for good and was completing my study of the Nuer in western Nuerland, but Mr. Howell assures me that it is common to all the tribes to the east of the Nile except the Jikany. Among the western Nuer it is believed that if the cattle are not returned the child may die and his ghost haunt his pater. The sixth cow, the one that remains with the husband, is called *yang kule*, the cow of the hide. The payment protects the husband from the sickness he might otherwise suffer were he to have relations with his wife after the adulterer has had relations with her—on the same sleeping-hide, as the Nuer put it. Among the western Nuer an adulterer may even receive 'the cow of the begetting' on the marriage of a daughter born of his adultery. I was told that her kin do not relish paying it, but may do so because it is feared that otherwise he may curse her and cause her to be barren or her children to die in infancy. In no circumstances can an adulterer claim the child of his adultery. Likewise a youth who impregnates an unmarried girl cannot claim the child of his fornication. 684

It will have been noted that the test of the nature of a procreative union is in the division of the bridewealth of a daughter born of it among those who count in one or other way as members of her family, and I conclude this section by a summary of the rules which regulate its distribution. When the pater is alive he receives 'the cattle of the father' and 'the cattle of the mother'. If he is dead they go to his sons, the bride's full and half-brothers. In ghost-marriage and leviratic marriage these rights are vested in the bride's brothers. The genitor as such has no legal claim to these cattle, but, since in a ghost-marriage he stands in the place of the pater with regard to the bride's brothers as well as to the bride herself, the cattle in any case join his herd and he will dispose of them in the interests of his sons, the bride's brothers. When the genitor has begotten the bride in leviratic marriage, division of the cattle may be more complicated because the bride may have grown-up brothers begotten by her dead pater. When the bride has been born in widow-concubinage the cattle which are the right of the parents go to her brothers, those due to the father going particularly to any sons begotten by her pater. 573

The genitor in ghost-marriage and in leviratic marriage may always ask for a cow for having begotten the bride in addition to any cattle due to a kinsman standing in his relationship to her. 'The cow of the begetting' or 'the cow of the loins', as it is also

583 called, is likewise paid to the genitor of daughters born in widow-concubinage, and if he acted also as foster-father to the bride and her brothers and sisters—'cut meat for them', as Nuer say—he may receive another two to four head of cattle of her bridewealth for having fostered the family. Also, when the daughter of his natural daughter is married, his legal son can claim a beast of the bridewealth. As I have explained, an adulterer may receive a cow on the marriage of his natural daughter, though I doubt if it is often paid.

There is no 'cow of the begetting' when the daughter of an unmarried concubine is married because the genitor by payment of a fee has made himself the pater also. 'The cattle of the father' go to him. As he is not the husband of the mother, 'the cattle of the mother', or some of them, may go to different kraals, because the bride's mother's sons have rights in them, and they may have been begotten and legitimatized by other men. For all these different cases I have stated only the principles of distribution of bridewealth. As I have explained earlier, actual distribution may be more complicated and depends on variable conditions. Among the Nuer these matters are discussed always in the idiom of cattle.

When a woman is married—that is to say, in all the cases we
have considered except that of unmarried concubinage—division
of the bridewealth of her daughters is determined by payment
of bridewealth for herself. The person in whose name she was
married with cattle is the pater of her children whether he begat
them or not, was dead or alive at the time of her marriage and
[60] the birth of her children, or is a man or a woman. Hence it follows
that agnatic descent is, by a kind of paradox, traced through the
mother, for the *rule* is that in virtue of payment of bridewealth all
who are born of her womb are children of her husband and there-
fore paternal kin, by whomsoever they may have been begotten.
They may count as children of a man their mother has never even
seen. They may have been begotten by several fathers, but they all
602 have the same pater. It is the fertility of the womb which a lineage
613 receives by payment of bridewealth. All children born of that
581 womb belong to the lineage; they are all agnates. This is a pro-
foundly significant fact in Nuer society. It affects, among other
things, the position of the family group in the kinship and lineage
systems. The custom by which men in ghost-marriage and levir-
atic marriage raise up seed to their kinsmen subordinates the

exclusive interests of the family to those of the wider circles of the 602
paternal kin and of the lineage. The prevalence of widow-concubinage 613
and simple concubinage also strengthens sentiments of 581
kinship, because there is in these cases no single undivided family, both legal and domestic, to demand a man's major allegiance at the expense of the solidarity of the wider kinship group which provides a boy with scope for his deepest interests and ambitions.

CHAPTER IV

THE FAMILY

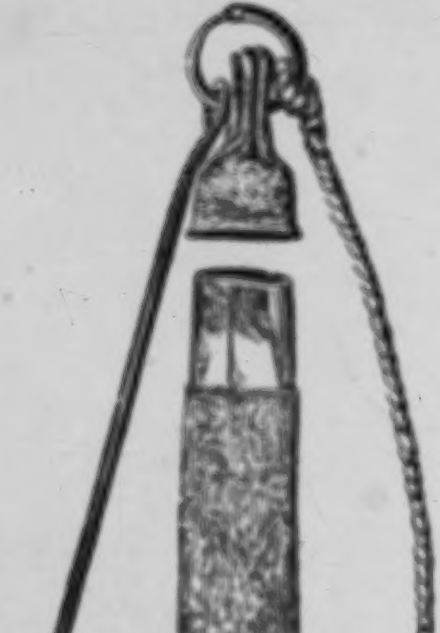
I

593 SIMPLE legal marriage and the simple legal family which derives from it are standards to which the other kinds of union and family I have described are made to approximate in the interrelations of the persons concerned as far as circumstances permit. Even in widow-concubinage and in simple concubinage the male partner takes on himself, though to a lesser degree than a true husband, the attitude of respect a man should display to his parents-in-law. A man who lives with a woman and her children, whether as the legal representative of the husband and pater or not, models his relations with them on those obtaining in the home of a simple legal family. It is of such a home and family that I now give some account.

592 We noted in the first chapter that a Nuer homestead, the home of a family, to the household of which other kin may be attached, consists of a byre and its attendant hut or huts. The byre, a massive wattle-and-daub structure of some 15 to 20 feet in diameter, is the material and moral centre of the homestead. A man who builds a byre has started a family, herd, and home of his own. The byre stands for the father's status in the family. While he is alive his wives and sons and daughters are bound to him.

The byre looks on to the kraal and is the sleeping-place of the cattle in the rains; and some of the young men of the household may also sleep there, on a platform over the dung fire kept burning in the centre of it to give the cattle protection from mosquitoes. In the daytime it is the club-room of the household and the guest-room of the homestead, for byres, besides signifying the presence of a family and its head, are centres of social life in Nuer villages. When one sees a hut by itself it means that the byre has fallen down and has not yet been rebuilt or that the owner of the hut possesses at the time too few cattle to make it worth his while to build a byre for himself, since he can easily house his animals in that of a kinsman; unless it is the hut of an old widow or of a semi-detached concubine, neither of whom are likely to have cattle of their own. It sometimes happens that even an unmarried man may have a byre if he is the eldest son of a dead man. When he is 592 initiated into manhood his paternal uncles ought to build him a byre, 'so that his father's fire may be relit', and to hand over to him his father's herd which they have held in trust till he should take his father's place as head of the family.

The wife has her hut at the side of the byre, and in a polygamous [595] family each wife has her own hut, where she and her children sleep. Near to it there may be a simple shelter for cooking. In a large homestead there may also be a hut for the youths of the household to sleep in, and perhaps a hut for the senior girls. The head of the family has no hut of his own but sleeps in the huts of his wives. In such a polygamous family all the huts of the wives are built around the byre, and this attachment symbolizes for Nuer what we call the agnatic principle of their society, which insists that all the sons of a man belong to his lineage irrespective of their maternal affiliations, their links with the kin of their mothers through the different huts within the homestead. Very early in life small boys are driven by their father or elder brothers away from their mothers' huts to the byre, the place of the menfolk of the family, where they eat, sleep, and spend the leisure hours of the day. When they are about seven or eight years of age they sleep there instead of in their mothers' huts, where the women and girls eat and sleep and near which they spend most of the day. The men and boys, to whichever hut they may belong, belong also, and primarily, to the byre and to its *gol*, a word which means, as I have earlier explained, the fire of cattle-dung kept burning day and night in the centre of the byre (there is sometimes a second one in the kraal) and its hearth; and also homestead, hamlet, family, household, and even lineage in certain contexts. Daughters belong to the huts and they will be married from them into stranger lineages, into which they are absorbed. Sons belong to the byre and to the lineage of its owner. This connexion between byre and lineage is seen when a new byre is built, [613] for then the master of ceremonies of the family is summoned to make a libation of beer to the guardian spirits and ancestral ghosts of the lineage before its central support is planted, so that they may give peace and prosperity to all who dwell therein. In the byre, at the side of the hearth, is kept a branch, decorated with metal rings and pieces of skins of sacrificed beasts, which serves as an ancestral shrine. In summer camps a windscreen takes the place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A snuff box
(Millet cane bound with the skin of a cow's tail)

of the byre as the men's dormitory and club, and the shrine is placed at its entrance. Small grass beehive huts take the place of the wattle-and-daub huts of the villages as the dwellings of the womenfolk of the home. 592

The polygamous family is a unit, the *gol* of the husband of the several wives. '*Jigoala*', 'the people of my hearth', are my family in this inclusive sense. But the children of each wife also belong exclusively to her *dwil* (or *ut*), hut, and to her *mac*, cooking-fire, so that the polygamous family is divided into a number of separate domestic groups within the larger whole. The huts of the different wives are the centres of these elementary families which have a common husband and father. Outside her hut each wife has her *buor*, a mud windscreen, against which she makes her cooking-fire, and near to it is her *thong*, a plastered hole in the ground for pounding millet (she has another fire-place and another pounding-hole inside her hut for use on rainy days). This mud screen, the top of which is fashioned into three humps, is the sign of a married woman's status as the mistress of her home and the mother of children, just as the hearth in the byre is the sign of a man's status as the father of a family and the master of household and herd; and it also has ritual associations, for sacrifices are made near it. It is the centre of a married woman's life. Here her friends and neighbours gossip with her when she is working or in the evening when work is done. 595

As boys grow up they attach themselves more and more to the byre, but each remains, both in sentiment and by social alinement, also a member of his mother's hut. Hence one may distinguish between full brothers and paternal half-brothers by saying that the first are brothers *kwi dwiel*, on the side of the hut (as we say, on the distaff side), while the second are brothers *kwi luak*, on the side of the byre (as we say, on the spear-side); and this distinction is a fundamental one in Nuer society, for it runs not only through the family but through the kin also, and is moreover the paradigm of the lineage structure. [593 611]

With the huts go the gardens, with the byre go the cattle and the kraal. Each wife has her own garden and granaries, and with her millet she makes porridge for herself and her daughters, small sons, and guests, and also porridge and beer for the men and boys in the byre, the male members of the whole household, only some of whom would be her own sons, and any male neighbours and

595 guests who may be present. A husband may have a garden of his own, but, if so, he distributes the millet among his wives when their supplies are running short.

422 613 The cattle belong to the husband. It is the usual practice for a man to divide his cows among his wives, but they only have the use of them for milking and cannot dispose of them. A cow given to a wife is merely what Nuer call 'a cow of the churning-gourd', seeing that it is given to the wife only so that she may have milk for her little ones and butter and cheese to pour over her porridge. It is true that the husband ought not to dispose of the cow without consulting her, and I have heard a wife protest strongly that she had not been advised of her husband's intentions; but she cannot refuse her consent to its disposal for the benefit of the family. Nor can she dispose of it herself. When I asked some Nuer whether a wife could give a cow which she always spoke about as 'my cow' to her brother, they wondered whether I was joking: 'Could she do such a thing? Would not her husband kill her? Give one of his cows to her brother indeed! Eh he!' If a man dies, leaving only young children, and his wives remain in his homestead or live with his brothers, they continue to have use of the cows he allocated to them during his lifetime. A dying man may expressly direct that they should do so. However, the trustees of the animals are the dead man's brothers and their disposal is subject to the claims of the family as a whole and must be in their common interest. If a widow tried to remove the cows from the herd and take them to the home of her brother, or of some man with whom she was living in concubinage, her husband's kin would certainly not, except in very special circumstances, permit their dispersal, for the cattle belong to the lineage, to the sons as a whole, who are links between the ancestors and its as yet unborn members. If the sons are men when their father dies they ought to go on living together round a common kraal. Nevertheless, as will be seen, they frequently do not do so. Whether they do so or not, the cattle belong to all of them and should be used, when the herd is large enough, to obtain wives for them in order of seniority, though in practice they are sometimes a bone of contention. Even cattle which come to wives on the marriages of their kinswomen (the cow of the paternal aunt and the cow of the maternal aunt) are not their property in an absolute sense. They have the use of them and should their husband die their sons inherit them, but while the

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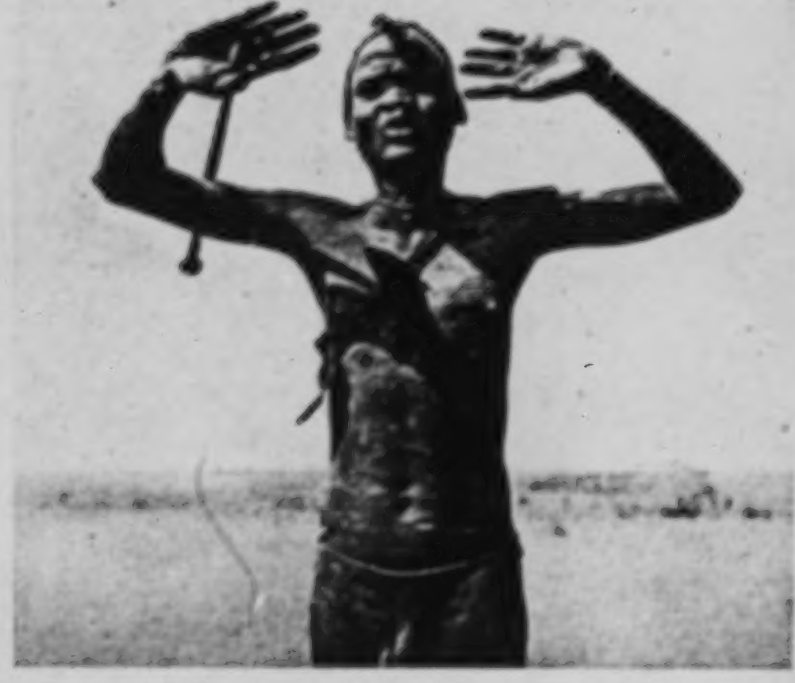

VII. A youth singing in praise of his ox. His arms are raised in imitation of its horns

[Facing page 128]

592 593 husband is alive the beasts count as part of his herd and the wives cannot dispose of them without his consent, which he can withhold. With the consent of the wife concerned, which she would find it difficult to withhold, he can dispose of them for marriages or other purposes.

A man also gives oxen to his sons so that they may display themselves in their company, but, here again, the sons do not have rights in them against their father, who can use the animals for any purpose he thinks fit, including the marriages of other sons than those to whom he has given the beasts, though he would promise a son deprived of his ox to replace it as soon as he could
428 593 do so. The only cattle a father cannot, or at any rate ought not to, take for his own use without his sons' consent are those which come to them by inheritance, for these are *ghok jookni*, cattle of the ghosts. They may come through a dead mother's right, or the son may be the child of a ghost-marriage or a leviratic marriage and have a right to the herd of his pater, which should not be set aside by the man who is acting in his father's place.

594 The family is an economic unit. Its members, with aid in certain undertakings from kinsmen and neighbours, maintain them-
462 selves and provide for their daily needs. None of the broader departments of economy are exclusively the domain of either sex and there is often direct mutual assistance between the sexes in the performance of tasks. Also, tasks which are normally performed by one sex may be performed by the other in circumstances which render this necessary. Nevertheless, there is a clear, and complementary, division of labour between men and women. Boys' work is mostly within the sphere of men's activities, the older boys performing many adult tasks, and, except for milking, they take no part in labour which is never done by men. Girls have the same duties as women, to the extent their age permits.

Most of the labour connected with the flocks and herds falls to the men and boys. The work of gardens is shared equally between men and women, sons assisting their mothers and the husband his wives. Only men hunt, and they and the boys do by far the greater part of the fishing. Women collect wild fruits and roots. Men do most of the building and repair of byres and huts, though women do some of the lighter tasks in these activities. Most of the daily tasks of the home, especially the preparation of food by churning, pounding, grinding, cooking, and brewing, are the

462 exclusive privilege of women. Men manufacture most of the weapons and ornaments they use for themselves and for the cattle, and women the utensils and ornaments they use.

In general it may be said that men take on themselves a fair share of the labour of the home, that the routine work of the homestead is chiefly in the hands of women and a man's work very largely in the bush, and that tasks requiring greater strength are done by men. Division of labour between age-grades is also equitable.

594 A Nuer home is run by the combined efforts of all its members and the labour of running it is fairly distributed among them. One cannot but be struck by the camaraderie of the family as they assist one another in daily and seasonal tasks, either by direct aid or by co-ordination of activities. No work is considered degrading, no one is a drudge, all have leisure for rest and recreation, and all are content with their roles in the economy of the home. Indeed, the division of labour between sexes and ages accords with the social and personal freedom of women and children in Nuerland and with the recognition, so striking among the Nuer, of the independence and dignity of the individual.

462 I have omitted details in this brief account of division of labour, but there is one to which attention must be drawn. No man may milk the cows. This can only be done by women and uninitiated boys, and boys do not generally milk if there are women in the home. Woman's exclusive role of milkmaid combined with her roles of dairymaid and cook make her the centre of family and household. However many cattle a man may possess, he is helpless without a wife or mother or sister to milk the cows. It is only through marriage that a man can have a home of his own, and one of the most serious consequences of divorce is that it compels him to attach himself to the home of a kinsman whose womenfolk can milk and cook for him. Hence, also, if a man dies leaving motherless unmarried sons, efforts are made for the eldest of them to be married as soon as possible so that the others may group themselves around him, or rather round his wife, who cooks and milks for them all. Otherwise the brothers may scatter to the homes of their married sisters, of their mothers' brothers, or of some other kinsmen. Even after men are married and have homes of their own there are many occasions when they have to rely on the wives of brothers or of other neighbours and kinsmen for the

462 milking of their cows. Nuer group themselves round a herd, and the rule prohibiting men from milking means that in grouping themselves around a herd they also group themselves around the milkmaid who serves the herd. This central position a wife has in Nuer economy, like the central position she has as a mother in the lineage, to which I have earlier referred, enhances her status in society. Here again also her position in this respect as in the other tends to break down narrow family exclusiveness and to draw closer to her husband his brothers and close paternal kin.

476 The family produces most of what it needs, and most of what it produces it consumes. Nevertheless, some tasks cannot be performed, and others are often not performed, by the ordinary family without assistance from kith and kin; and there is much sharing among neighbours. Most hunting, and much of the fishing, require more participants than the family can muster, and unless families take it in turn to herd, a single family would find it difficult or impossible, especially in dry-season camps, to look after its cattle, calves, sheep, and goats, as well as to attend to the children and the tasks of kraal and kitchen. Help in activities requiring co-operation, as well as in milking when that is required, is given by close neighbours who are also kinsmen. Also, there are other tasks which, though they might be accomplished by the family unaided, are often, but by no means always, performed by co-operative parties of neighbours: clearing gardens, making drainage trenches, dams, and seed-beds in swampy ground, weeding, harvesting, threshing, and building. The helpers are given beer or porridge or both. Thus Nuer say of building a byre: 'We Nuer cut the supports with beer, we cut the grass with beer, we build the walls with beer, and we erect the supports with porridge.' Although a family probably spends as much labour in helping other people as would, had it been expended in their own home and gardens, have enabled them to be self-sufficient in maintaining them, it is much more pleasantly spent when distributed in this way. Not only is a family relieved of the necessity of tackling particularly laborious jobs unaided, but when the work is done by mutual aid it becomes something of a game, losing its monotony in merry company and in the feelings of good-neighbourliness it engenders; for the beer and porridge are not payment for work done but hospitality provided for friends and kin, who accept the invitation to take part in the work because they are friends and

476 kin. The owner of the homestead does not supervise the work, and each does as much or as little as he chooses. Apart from co-operative parties of this kind Nuer, especially the women, prefer to perform their like, but several, duties in company where this is convenient, as when women collect wild fruits or draw water, boys herd the goats and sheep, and men fish with spears in pools, lagoons, and the shallows of streams.

602 A kinsman is also expected to help another who is in need by giving him what he is in need of if he is in a position to do so. Nuer say that 'among kinsmen of every kind there is no purchase' and that 'with us Nuer, it is all giving and begging'. Also, Nuer
574 eat so much in each other's byres and windscreens that, as far as the
621 men are concerned, there may be said to be to some extent commensalism among the members of nearby homesteads and even between the members of a small village. Nuer keep open house and, in their summer camps especially, men visit one another so regularly to drink milk together that an elder man does not care to drink milk alone but sends a small boy to invite an age-mate to share his gourd with him. Nuer readily lend milch cows to families with small children and make gifts of millet and fish to those in need. When animals are sacrificed the meat is generally the right of a family, or of a family and their close kin, but neighbours often receive meat if they ask for it persistently enough, for it is not thought mean to refuse. On some occasions a beast belongs to whoever can seize meat from it, but on such occasions men of the same household assist one another, and as those taking part in the scrimmage are all kith and kin a sense of fairness prevails. In general it may be said that no one in a Nuer village starves unless all are starving. The food supply of a community is ultimately at the disposal of all its members within whose corporate life each family has security to pursue its particular interests and to satisfy its most elementary needs.

II

121 Though I did not study in detail relations within the Nuer family, I could not have avoided reaching some general conclusions about them, and I set these down here in so far as they relate to the kinship system and the life of the wider society, the values of which, reflected in modes of address, are assimilated to those obtaining within the family.

THE FAMILY

593

Nuer have told me, though they do not like to speak of it, for it touches on death, that there is what we would call a latent hostility between husband and wife, and indeed between man and woman. They say that when a man has begotten several children by his wife he wants her to die, and may even pray for this to happen, for he does not want to die before her and another man to cohabit with her, rule in his home, use his cattle, and perhaps ill treat his children and rob them of their birthright. Men say also that women in their hearts wish for their husbands' deaths. Whatever may be the significance that should be attached to these statements and to stories in which similar sentiments are expressed, family life among the Nuer is remarkably harmonious on the surface. I attribute this, in part at any rate, to the unchallenged authority of the husband in the home. A woman must obey her husband, and Nuer say that when he swears at her she must not answer back, and that he has the right to chastise her if she neglects her children or domestic duties. They told me that should [682] he kill her (I have never heard of a case of the kind), whatever trouble his action may otherwise bring on him, he will not have to pay compensation, for she belongs to her husband's people and he only destroys what is his own, losing thereby both wife and the cattle he paid for her. No doubt there are cases of cruelty, especially where captive Dinka women are concerned, and I have been told of such, but I must record that during a year spent in intimate contact with Nuer in villages and camps I did not once see a man strike his wife or hear a serious quarrel between spouses, and I believe therefore that these are rare happenings.

Women know their duties and unless they are by nature lazy and slovenly, or wish to goad their husbands into divorcing them, they avoid domestic shortcomings. The husband, for his part, does not interfere with his wife's organization of her duties. So long as she performs them she may do so in her own way. For instance, when there is meat, a man hands it to his wife to prepare and leaves it to her discretion to decide how much of it to keep for herself and her children and how much to serve to the menfolk in the byre. Moreover, it is difficult for a man to ill-treat his wife, even should he wish to do so, for his conduct cannot be kept secret and his kinsmen would certainly intervene on her behalf. I have been told that no reputation in Nuerland is more shameful than that of a wife-beater, a man who prefers *kur man*, fighting with women, to

593 *kur wutni*, fighting with men. Also, a Nuer woman—a Dinka captive is not in so favourable a position—who readily accepts admonishment and correction for faults, would not submit to bullying but would return to her parents and brothers, leaving her husband without cook, dairymaid, and nurse, and therefore unable to maintain his home; and he might find it difficult to persuade her to return. If she does return it will only be after lengthy discussions in her parents' home and, as he is likely to have said something unpleasant about them in altercations with his wife, he may have to pay them a cow in compensation. Even if her father and brothers support her husband, he cannot prevent her from running away again, and this time to some distant relative who is unconcerned alike whether the bridewealth is returned or what the husband's grievances and discomforts may be. Should he [586] decide to divorce her and marry again, he has first to get his cattle back—it is always doubtful whether he will succeed in doing so—and he has then to face two or three years as a bachelor before his new wife comes to live with him. Therefore he will only take this step if his wife shows that she is determined to leave him, or if she is incorrigibly lazy, dirty, foul-mouthed, quarrelsome, or wanton, and occasionally if she is barren. Even if she has these defects he may, rather than go through the tedious process divorce entails, let her depart and bear him children by other men. A man will seldom divorce his wife for adultery unless she is constantly unfaithful.

562 With rare exceptions, I found Nuer women well content with their station and that their husbands and other men treated them [681] with respect. In saying that their status in society is high I am judging not so much by the fact that the same number of cattle have to be paid for the homicide of a woman as of a man, and I believe more for a young woman in some parts of Nuerland, but by the part women take in the daily life of the community. They mix freely and with easy assurance with the men, and they do not hesitate to argue with them about matters in which they are interested as women. They have as intimate relations as the men with the cherished cattle, share with them the life of the kraal, and enter the byres when they wish to do so.

595 In a polygamous family the relations between husband and wife are complicated by the husband's relations with his other wives. *Nyak*, a co-wife, in its verbal form means both 'to be a co-wife' and,

ominously, 'to be jealous'. The first wife has no special status, 595 though the husband generally consults her more than the other wives because he married her first and started his home and family with her. On the contrary, Nuer insist on the equality of wives, and they recognize that custom of the home is intended to eliminate as far as possible friction between them. The wives generally cook in turn for the husband and the byre, and each cooks as well for herself, her daughters, and small sons; but it is also a convention that a wife shall frequently cook for the family of a co-wife and that the children of one hut may eat in any other hut. I was told that if there is any trouble between the huts this convention is unlikely to be observed. Nuer have told me also that some women, while they give food they have cooked to their co-wives, remove part of it before doing so and hide it for their own children to eat in secret; and there is even a word for this part. It is impressed on boys that when they bring fish or meat to the home they should not give it to their own mothers but to another of their father's wives. A man would never address one of his mother's co-wives as [601] '*ciek gwar*', 'my father's wife', but either as '*ma*', mother', or by some honorific title; and she would reply '*gatda*', 'my son', and not '*gat nyakda*', 'son of my co-wife'. Indeed, there is the same kind of assertion, in the face of reason and experience, that '*ciek gur*', 'your father's wife', is '*mor*', 'your mother', as is made when Nuer say that '*gat gur*', 'your father's son', is '*demor*', 'your mother's son'; and the two assertions are different sides to the same dogma, to a further consideration of which I shall return. But though children are told that their father's other wives should not be treated differently from their mother, it seems to be acknowledged by all that there is likely to be jealousy between co-wives, especially if the husband appears to favour one wife or her children, and that it is a misfortune for children should their mother die and they be left to the care of a co-wife. Nuer say that this is what happened to *gukur*, the dove, and is the reason for its plaintive note '*giek ciek gur*', 'bad is your father's wife'.

Before considering briefly relations between parents and children it is, I think, important to recognize that a Nuer child is not born into the family alone and then slowly extends his awareness to members of the household and kin, but is born into a wider circle than the family, in the sense that all those who share the homestead of the father and adjacent homesteads take an interest

545 in the child from the time the mother leaves her hut after bearing him. The father's other wives, his brothers and their wives, and other kinsmen and affines of the father if they live near him, take

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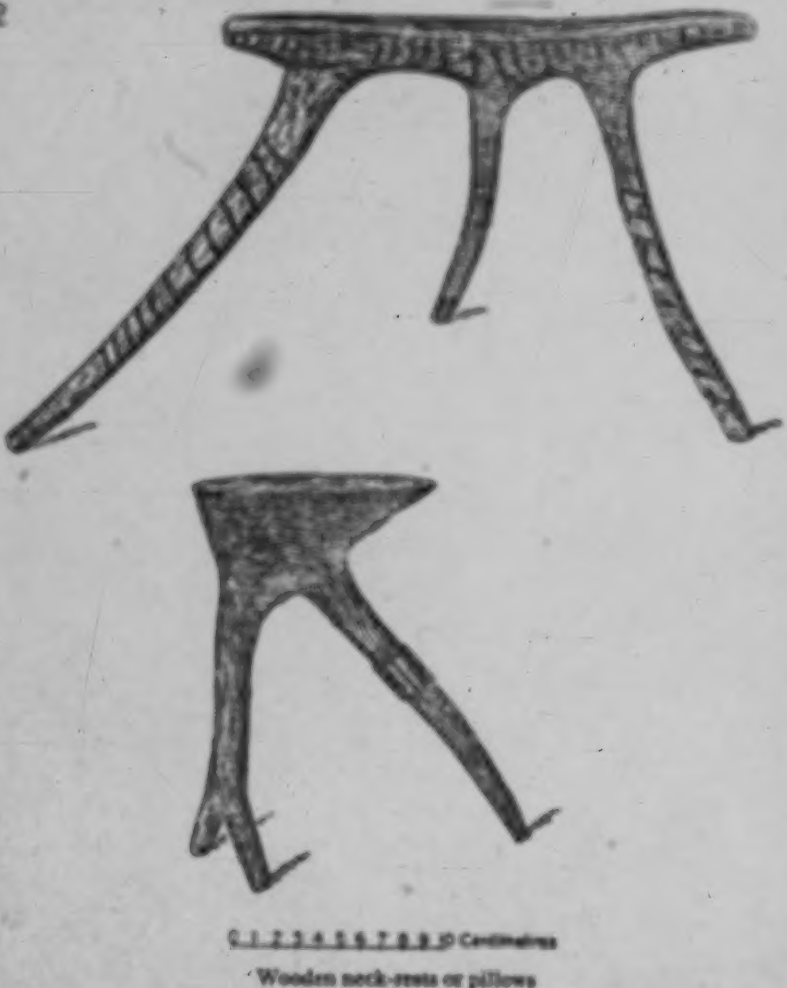

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Wooden neck-rests or pillows

545 frequent notice of the child, nurse him, talk to him, and make him understand that they belong to him. If he is an eldest child and is brought up in his maternal grandparents' home, he will have the same close relations with corresponding persons there.

842 Nuer welcome children and hope when they marry that their wives will be fertile.

wives will be fertile. Abortion is said to be very rare and practised 847
only by unmarried girls. Though the men of the kraal may hope
that monorchids and babies born with defects and deformities
will not survive, they do not kill them or let them die. The proper 854
care and nurture of children is the concern of the whole family
and household, and from the moment of birth care is taken to
isolate the child from any contact which might be injurious to it.
Even the father keeps away from the mother's hut for the first few
days lest he inadvertently cause it some misfortune. The prohibi- 853
tion on coitus between parents till the child is weaned is seldom
infringed, although it imposes long abstinence, for the child is
suckled till he can digest solid food and can toddle about home-
stead and camp by himself. Artificial aids to weaning are rarely 862
necessary, infants passing slowly from the breast to cow- and goat-
milk, though sometimes they are sent to their maternal grand-
parents for some weeks to make the break. Children have first
claim in the allocation of milk from the herd, and if there is a
shortage it is the adults, and not they, who go without.

The care of small children falls naturally to the mother, and it 857
is she who feeds and bathes them and attends to their other wants. 593
But the father also takes an interest in his infant children, and one
often sees a man nursing his child while the mother is engaged in
the tasks of the home. Nuer fathers are proud of their children and
give much time to them, petting and spoiling them, giving them
titbits, playing with them, and teaching them to talk; and the
children are often in the byres with the men. The affection of
children for their fathers is very striking in Nuerland. I have
never seen a man beat his child or lose his temper with him, how-
ever aggravating he might be. When a father speaks crossly to his [861]
child, as he does if, let us say, the child goes to the edge of a river
or among the cattle, where he may be injured, it is evident that
the child is not afraid of his loud words and obeys from affection
rather than fear. In his first years a child is corrected by his mother
and elder brothers and sisters, who may give him a few strokes
with a grass switch if he is naughty.

Daughters grow up under the direction of their mothers. 867
Mother and elder sisters give a girl training in household tasks 868
and what moral advice and worldly wisdom they care to impart. 593
The father takes little interest in the affairs of his daughters. His
chief concern with them is to ensure that they are well married.

868 Boys come under their father's direction. He and the other men of
593 the kraal see that they carry out their duties in the care of flocks and herds. Boys learn from their elder brothers and cousins how to fish, hunt, cultivate, dance, flirt, and engage in the other activities of men. A boy can see the stages of his life before him—initiation, courtship, marriage, and the starting of a family and home—and he realizes even in childhood that these stages are bound up with his father's herd, and that he and his brothers have a common interest with their father in the herd. It is very noticeable that when boys talk about the cattle it is in reference to marriage and when girls talk about them it is in reference to milk.

593 In my experience, it is only when a father is selfish or extravagant in his use of the herd that, even when his sons are men, any serious disagreement is likely to arise between them. Even then, young men submit to their father's indiscretions. If they may show their disapproval by going to stay with relatives for a time they say little, partly, no doubt, because they fear a father's anger and curse, but chiefly, I believe, because, in spite of faults, they love and respect their fathers. Though relations between a father and his son may be strained, the sorrow and anxiety of the son should his father fall sick are most apparent. Nuer say that should father and son fail altogether to agree the son may go to live permanently with his maternal uncle, but this would be a most serious offence in the eyes of Nuer, being *dakene mar*, the breaking of kinship. I have never known it happen.

Boys treat their mothers with affection, though they are offhanded with them and are sometimes rude to them. When they are approaching the threshold of manhood a feeling of male superiority seems to affect their attitude to their mothers. I was told that a youth would never interfere on his mother's behalf should his father be angry with her, though should the father wish to beat her the son would not reveal her hiding-place lest she
[842] should curse him. A mother's curse prevents a man from begetting male children. Fear of it was the reason given me for the care Nuer take of their mothers when they are very old, carrying them on their shoulders from village to camp and from camp to village, but, here again, I think that natural affection is a stronger motive.

My observations of the relations between parents and children do not permit me to develop the subject beyond such general impressions as I have given. I would like, however, to draw attention

to the peculiar position in each elementary family of the eldest 593
child.* The eldest child of either sex is known as *gat ma keagh* and [601]
the mother may address him (or her) as *keaghda*, my first-born. This child must never use the spoon of his father or mother, and I [603]
have sometimes been given to understand that this is one of the reasons for the bringing up of an eldest child by his maternal grandparents, it being felt better to keep him away from his parents' home till he is of an age to observe the prohibition. He must also avoid sleeping or sitting on his mother's sleeping-hide, for this may make her barren and may also injure the father, the child himself, and the cattle. I believe also that if the eldest child is a girl she may not use the horns of female animals for any purpose. When an eldest male child is initiated an extra incision is made, at [881]
any rate in some parts of Nuerland, on his forehead—seven instead of the usual six—and an ox must be sacrificed at the ceremony, whereas a goat or sheep may be considered sufficient for a younger son. Parents, especially the mother, and maternal uncles are said to fear the curse of an eldest child.

These customs relating to the eldest child are an indication of his special position in the family and kinship system. He is born in his mother's home and ought to be brought up there if his maternal grandmother is alive. If she is dead the child will probably be brought up by his parents till he is about six years of age, and then go to his maternal uncle till puberty. The eldest child is the keystone of the marriage. Till he is born the marriage is not [602]
regarded as complete. He is also the link through which the kin of the father and the kin of the mother are brought into relations of kinship with one another, for the child is the child of the mother's people as well as the child of the father's people. It is true that he belongs to his father's lineage, because he is the child of their cattle, but the sentimental claim of his mother's people to their daughter's child is recognized in their right to bring the child up in their home.

Indeed it must be acknowledged that in Nuer family life there is always a pull on the children in both directions: a pull of legal and religious norms and of the whole pattern of the politico-social

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* The youngest child, the *pek*, also has a special position in the family, an indication of which in a male child is in some tribes the cutting of an extra line on his forehead at initiation, as in the case of an eldest male child. I am not certain, however, how socially significant is his position.

593 structure towards the father's kin and lineage, and a pull of personal affection towards the mother's people. Rights in the herd, duties of blood revenge, and status in the community hold a man to his father's kin, but with these go jealousy about cattle, resentment against authority, and personal rivalries. A man has no rights in his maternal uncle's herd, he has no obligation to assist his maternal uncle's people in their feuds, and he has no hereditary status in his maternal uncle's community. But the fact that he lacks these rights and duties and status means that he is not burdened with the disputes and tensions they engender. The paternal ties are stronger, if there is a touch of hardness in them. The maternal ties are weaker and for this reason are tenderer. In the Nuer family the tension is greatest in the case of the eldest child, especially an eldest son, for both families more strongly assert their rights in him than in the younger children, but it is inherent in the nature of the Nuer family and has also a more general social significance in the counter-attraction of the lineage on one side and the wider society on the other.

595 This pull in opposite directions, towards the father's kin and towards the mother's kin, is most evident in polygamous families, where the sons of each hut have different sets of kinsmen on the mother's side. I cannot say what is the frequency of polygamy in Nuer society, and it would in any case be difficult, in view of the variety of Nuer domestic unions, to decide on a criterion of polygamy; but though monogamous marriage is much commoner, polygamy is frequent enough to have set its stamp, through its association with wealth and social influence, on the lineage system. The polygamous family is for the Nuer the ideal form of family life and every man would like to attain to it. It has therefore importance out of all proportion to the actual number of such families. The values and the whole conception of the lineage system are reflected in it.

613 A Nuer lineage is often named after a woman, its ancestress, because lineages are generally thought of as dividing out from within a polygamous family. They cannot be differentiated by reference to the name of the father of the founders of the different lines of descent, but only by reference to the names of the founders themselves or of their mothers. Thus the typical lineage structure is conceived of as being present in the structure of the polygamous family and in the distribution of huts in the homestead it occupies:

This is why a lineage is generally called a *thok dwiel,* the entrance 613 to the hut—not the byre—or a *thok mac,* the hearth of the fire at which women cook—not that around which men sit and sleep.

There is involved here a contradiction between the dogma of the 593 unity of brothers, which the Nuer so often enunciate, and both the lineage system and the common experience of family life. It is a cardinal teaching that all brothers are equal and undivided, for they are all sons of the same father and therefore, through their identification with him, equivalent in the lineage. Maternal descent does not count within the lineage and therefore ought not to count within the family, for by the agnatic principle in Nuer social life the family derives from the father. Hence, Nuer say, if your uterine brother and your paternal half-brother quarrel you must not enter the dispute on your uterine brother's side, because by so doing you divide the family. You split, as it were, the father.

That the huts do not divide the byre is particularly emphasized 593 by, and in, the rule, previously referred to in our discussion of 582 bridewealth, that brothers must marry in order of seniority of birth, a division by age reinforced by the distinctions of the age-set system, irrespective of whether in each marriage the cattle of the bridewealth came into the family herd from the previous marriages of the particular brother's full or half-sisters. Also, all the brothers must marry before any one of them takes a second wife. Even after the father is dead, opinion enforces this rule. It is only when, as rarely happens, there are enough cattle for a further marriage from the herd before the younger brothers are old enough to take wives that an elder brother may marry a second wife before they are married. When a man dies his eldest son takes his place as head of the family: 'He changes himself into something like their father.' It is then his duty to see that his unmarried brothers are not unfairly treated. Should the family disperse and one of the brothers attempt to take for himself all 'the cattle of the mother' of his uterine sisters' marriages, and refuse to allow them to be used for the marriage of a half-brother who is the senior of the unmarried sons of the family, it might prove difficult to prevent his doing so; but were he to do so, he would cut himself off from his brothers and paternal kinsmen. They would not any more assist him in his troubles and quarrels. 'They may even let him be killed unaided and recoup themselves for his past meanness

593 with the cattle they receive in compensation for his death.' This is
582 the final and, to a Nuer, most frightful sanction.

593 Nuer feelings about this matter are reflected in their use of kinship terms. 601 Although '*demar*' (or '*gatmar*') means 'my uterine brother' and '*gatgwar*' is the term for 'my father's son' (paternal half-brother), they almost invariably use the term for the uterine brother to refer to, or address, the half-brother and keep the term for 'father's son' to speak about or address paternal cousins. To address a father's son by the term for this relationship is regarded as very bad form because it makes a cleavage in the family. It would be even worse to call your full brother '*gatgwar*', 'my father's son'. The term would only be used for this person as an affectionate meiosis. In the same way, a man must not address his paternal half-sister by the term for this relationship ('*nyigwa*'), for '*nyagur e jen nyimor*', 'your father's daughter (paternal half-sister) is your mother's daughter (full sister)'. It is true, as will be seen in the next chapter, that there is a general tendency for Nuer to use kinship terms for persons who stand in a more distant relationship to those which they denote and that the terms '*demar*' ('*gatmar*') and '*nyimar*' are freely used for almost any person of a man's own generation, but Nuer particularly emphasize the need for this displacement in the case of half-brothers and half-sisters. Nuer have told me that they are so anxious not to distinguish between full and half-brothers that should a man go with his half-brother to visit his mother's sister's home, the young men of that home will make a point of greeting the half-brother first and of addressing him as '*gatmar*', 'son of my mother', before addressing their true mother's sister's son by this term (which correctly applies to him and not to his half-brother). I have earlier noted that the wife of one brother is spoken about as the wife of all the brothers and her children as the children of them all.

595 But although Nuer are constantly asserting the solidarity of the polygamous family, 593 it is as evident to themselves as it is to the observer that things are often different. They recognize that whereas full brothers pool their resources, helping each other even to the point of forgoing their rights, paternal half-brothers insist on their rights and try to avoid their obligations, doing for each other only what self-interest demands of them. Nuer are not surprised at—they expect—coldness between half-brothers, and disagreements and disputes between them, and between paternal

cousins, are endemic in Nuer society. Quarrels between half- 595
brothers are a frequent theme in stories of the separation of 593
lineages and the dispersal of paternal kin. They are the 'bulls' of whom I said in Chapter I that each goes his own way and seeks to gather round himself a separate cluster of kin and affines. Even when there are no disagreements half-brothers tend to drift apart after the death of their father, especially after they are married, and go to live with their different maternal and affinal kin.

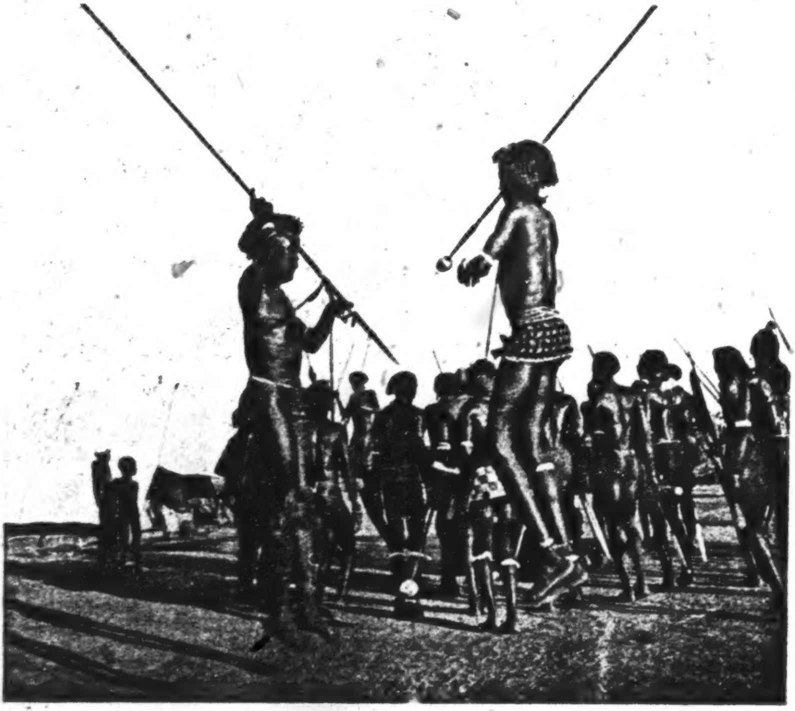
However, sons ought to continue to live together on the death 593
of their father, and it is hoped that they will do so. If they live 428
together there is less chance of unfairness in the disposal of the cattle and of resultant disputes. A man may anticipate difficulties of the kind by directing before his death how his herd is to be divided among his sons. If he does not do this, it ought to remain undivided till all the sons are married. What is left of it may then be divided among them at a family council. There is more likelihood of this being done if all the sons live together, for then, even though the herd is divided among the huts, it is still very much a single herd in a common kraal. When one of the brothers wants to marry, the different huts will all 'loosen cattle' for his marriage, as they would have done had the father been alive. But if a widow takes her sons to her own kin or to the home of a lover in a distant part of the country, the half-brothers who remain in their father's home are less inclined to help them when they want to marry, and if they have no uterine sisters they may then find it difficult to do so. Nevertheless, a boy without uterine sisters is to some extent protected by the rules governing division of bridewealth, which ensure that he will receive at least some of the cattle of the marriages of his paternal half-sisters. He will also receive cattle on the marriages of other female relatives: the daughters of his father's brothers and sisters and the daughters of his mother's brothers and sisters. He may possibly also receive *wangnen* cattle of his grandparents. Though he lives apart from them, his half-brothers will not seek to deprive him of his rights in bridewealth, even if they are not ready to help him by gifts from their own herds.

In discussing the shortcomings of half-brothers Nuer often 593
further mention the obligation to marry a wife to the name of a man who dies without heirs. If he leaves behind an unmarried uterine brother, this brother will use the cattle brought into the

593 home on the marriage of one of their sisters to take a wife in his name. If he had only half-brothers it is feared that they may try to 'blot out' the dead man's name and use the cattle to marry wives in their own names. To prevent this it is said that the dead man's mother's people may, if there was no close friendship between him and his half-brothers, arrange for his uterine sister to marry a wife to his name. Her husband then takes the cattle which would have gone to the dead man on the marriages of his sisters and makes the arrangements for his wife to marry a wife to his name with them, though he does not himself cohabit with this wife. Nuer say that in affairs of this kind a sister's son can be trusted better than a paternal half-brother. As I have mentioned in the last chapter, the disposal of widows may occasion rancour among paternal half-brothers.

604 The distinction between full and half-brothers runs right the way through the Nuer kinship system. Nuer say that '*gurlen kwi dwiel*', 'your father's brother on the side of the hut' (his uterine brother), is a real father to you, but '*gurlen kwi luak*', 'your father's brother on the side of the byre' (his paternal half-brother), is only a father in his talk. If your father is dead and you are still a boy he may take advantage of your youth to deprive you of your rights. Similarly, Nuer say that the *nar mande* (or *nar kwi dwiel*), the mother's uterine brother, is a real mother and father, but not the *nar gwande* (or *nar kwi luak*), the mother's paternal half-brother. I once asked a youth who was threatening to fight his maternal uncle over an insult he considered he had received from him, 'But surely he is your maternal uncle?' 'Yes,' he replied, 'but only a maternal uncle on the father's side.'

593 When we speak of uncles on the byre-side we speak of half-brothers of the parents who own their own herds and homesteads, maybe in different villages, districts, or even tribes. They have already become distinct points of growth on the lineage branch. There is no pretence here that they are undivided. This dogma does not go beyond the family: sons in relation to their father. As we have seen, within the family it is the assertion of an ideal in the face of recognized social actualities which only partly conform to it; for the difference between full and half-brothers, or between the huts, in a family is both marked and a matter of concern to Nuer. It is clearly connected with the lineage structure and with the importance of the maternal kin in social life, which is related



VIII. The leaping movement (*rau*) in a dance

[Facing page 144]

593 to that structure, for both act to pull apart the children of different wives of the same husband.

593 611 I shall return to the distinction between full and half-brothers when discussing the Nuer kinship system. We will then see how categories of relationship fall into two broad classes: the 'bulls', the paternal kin and members of the lineage, and those traced in one way or another through women, the *gaatnyiet*, the children of girls. Half-brothers are 'bulls', but full brothers, who form the closest of all relationships except for that of twins,* are not only paternal kin but also maternal kin. A full brother 'is like your mother and your father'.

III

593 Complicated patterns of family relationships arise from the different forms of domestic union I described in the last chapter, and a rather lengthy discussion of them cannot be avoided.

Often there is opposition between the interests of the legal family and the interests of these other bio-domestic groups; that is to say, between the interests of the group united by marriage and descent and the interests of the procreative group united by common residence and life. When a child is a member of both groups it sometimes happens that the privileges he derives from membership of the one clash with his feelings towards the people of the other. The extent to which this opposition affects the lives of the persons concerned depends on conditions which vary in each case. It is impossible in advance to know how any particular person will be affected, and one can only guess how he will act when one knows the characters as well as the status of the people involved. But the normative principles that govern the behaviour of parents and children may be explained. In any particular case their actions will tend to follow the lines here laid down. Only the position of sons is considered. Daughters will not remain with either their genitor or the kinsmen of their pater, but will become members of their husbands' households. Control over their persons is therefore not disputed, and division of their bridewealth is so well defined by custom that it is a matter of minor importance where they are brought up.

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845 * Twins have a peculiar social position, being treated as one person, and are the object of special observances which I have described in detail in the *Uganda Journal* (1936).

THE FAMILY

593 The simple legal family in which husband and wife are both legal and natural parents of the children has great cohesion and permanent lines of descent join father and sons. It has the advantage over the other domestic groups under discussion that the formal status of its members towards one another is generally in harmony with their sentiments. For example, the respect and affection of a son for a father are directed towards a legal father. Also, even when there is friction between son and father, there is no opposing group to which the son can attach himself without losing to some extent the privileges of his birthright. This is the sense of a remark made to me by a youth who was openly on bad terms with his father: 'If he (my father) had been my genitor only (and not my pater) I would long ago have left him and started a kraal of my own.' A youth is firmly bound to his family from motives of self-interest no less than from habit and sentiment of home. If he leaves them he will not go to live at the home of another man he calls 'father' but with his mother's kin or with affinal relations.

When a man marries a wife to the name of his father or brother or paternal uncle, the relations between the members of the group that ensues are the same as those between members of a simple legal family during the childhood and boyhood of the sons, as far as can be judged by behaviour and expression of sentiment, and it is only in legal alinement that the groups differ; but when the sons become men there is a significant difference between them. A son of a simple legal family has no property rights independent of his father. But when, for example, a man has married a wife in the name of his paternal uncle, the son he begets is his father's brother's son and belongs to a different family to that of the man who begat him. When the son grows up his legal personality is merged in that of his dead pater, whose status he assumes and whose property rights he inherits. If the pater left cattle the genitor ought to have held them in trust for his sons. Even if the pater, as is often the case, had no cattle when he died, he had potential rights in his family herd and in the bridewealth of sisters and kinswomen, and these rights his sons inherit. Consequently, if a son born in the union of ghost-marriage does not agree with the man who stands in the place of his pater, he is able more easily to take up an independent position than a son born of simple legal marriage. However, I know of no serious dispute

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
FJ22 Nuer FJ22

between a ghost-son and his genitor where they are paternal kin, for the genitor stands in the place of the pater and has the same desire to see his sons, having probably no legal children of his own, happy and wealthy as a pater has. A ghost-son is generally content to see his genitor dispose of his cattle during his boyhood, knowing that when he is old enough to marry he will be provided for. 593

When a man marries a wife in the name of his maternal uncle a difficult situation may arise. Such a marriage usually takes place when the dead man has no close paternal kinsmen; and the sister's son often marries the wife with part of the uncle's herd and takes charge of the remainder of it. In childhood the relations between parents and children are the same as those in a ghost-family in which pater and genitor are paternal kinsmen, but when the sons grow up differences between them and their genitor are likely to be acute if the genitor has abused his trust. It is less an abuse for a paternal kinsman to use the dead man's cattle for his own purposes, since they both belong to the same agnatic and cattle-group, than for a sister's son to do the same, for the sister's son is not a member of the lineage of the pater and has no rights in their cattle. When the daughters he begets by his maternal uncle's wife are married he ought to keep the cattle of their bridewealth till the brothers of the girls are old enough to marry with them. Nevertheless, he may take advantage of their minority. Since the dead man's paternal kin are unlikely to be very close kin, they may do little beyond protesting, especially if, as is probable, the sister's son lives among them; but there is almost certain to be bad feeling in the family. The position of the sons is difficult, and the conflict between their regard for their genitor, whom they have always regarded as their father in every practical sense, and their resentment at the injustice done to them may only be solved by their going eventually to join the household of some paternal kinsman of their pater.

If he is to avoid trouble a man who cohabits with his brother's widow must likewise remember that her children, whether begotten by the dead man or by himself, are his wards and that he is trustee and not owner of his brother's herd. When the eldest son has been initiated into manhood he takes the place of his pater as head of the family. If his guardian is wise he will respect his nephew's independent status and will build him a byre next to his own and give him the cattle to which he is heir. Then difficulties between them need not arise, and his nephews will retain their 593 604

593 respect and affection for him and will share their cattle with him.
604 But Nuer are greedy where cattle are concerned, and the temptation to use a dead brother's herd and the bridewealth of his daughters to marry wives for himself during the minority of his sons is sometimes more than a man can resist. When his nephews grow up they find that he has no cattle left for them to marry with and they are resentful and want to know what has happened to their father's herd. A nephew in this position is unlikely to move away from the village in which he has been brought up because it is his own village where his paternal kinsmen live, but his relations with his uncle may become strained and he may harden in his insistence on his full legal rights in future instead of accepting a friendly give-and-take arrangement. If exasperated beyond endurance, he may go to live elsewhere, perhaps with his maternal kin. Here again conflicting loyalties may make a youth's position difficult, for as a son he feels he ought to respect and obey his father and as a nephew he feels he ought to insist on his rights. Trouble is most likely to arise when a boy falls under the guardianship of a brother of his dead pater and is not begotten by him.

593 The opposition between the legal family and the natural family is most evident when a son is born in widow-concubinage. In ghost-marriage and leviratic marriage the genitor is a legal substitute for the pater, but the genitor of a child born in widow-concubinage has no such status. When the brothers of the pater are alive and family feeling is strong they insist on his sons being initiated in his home and living with them afterwards. Nuer say that an orphan who has been initiated at his uncles' home and has rights in cattle there will not want to leave it. They are likely also to bring the dead man's daughters to live with them so that they can be married from their home. The genitor cannot deny them their right when they tell him that they want the children of their cattle. Thus it often happens that a boy is brought up in one social group but belongs legally to, and later joins, a different social group. The sentiments of childhood attach him to the home of his mother and genitor, and while he is small he does not think of any other place as his home. But when he reaches manhood the sense of paternal kinship so strong in Nuer, and desire for the cattle of his heritage, attract him to the village of his true paternal kinsmen.

If a dead man has brothers they are almost certain, especially if

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they are uterine brothers, to want their child to live among them. Where we find adult sons living with their natural fathers in Nuerland it generally means that they have no close paternal kin. Or it may mean that the genitor is rich in cattle while the paternal kin, though close kin, are poor. A youth with close kin who possess herds does not care to live in the home of his genitor after his initiation, for he is always regarded there as to some extent an outsider, whereas in the home of his pater he is there by right of birth: 'He will visit his mother and the man who begat him now and again, sometimes for a month or two, but his home is the home of his dead father.'

A youth's allegiance also to some extent depends on the circumstances of the widow-concubinage in which he was born. If his natural father lived apart from his mother and merely visited her from time to time he counts for little, but if he shared her home he is of greater importance and his children will retain their affection for him and pay him frequent visits should he be later separated from them. Knowing how powerful an influence feelings of kinship and cattle interests will have on his sons when they grow up, he tries to win their love when they are small so that it may endure all the changes of life. 'When a man has a son by a widow-concubine he wishes the child to be with him the whole time so that when the child grows up he will know him and not desert him but remain in his home.' If a lover wins the affection of his sons in this way he may be able to keep them with him, especially if he and the paternal kinsmen of the sons occupy the same village, for sons generally wish to live after initiation with their paternal kin. Should he and the widow live elsewhere the sons are likely to part from them. This is a great stumbling-block to Nuer. 'You think how when they were little you carried them in your arms and played with them and fed them with titbits, and now they have gone to live with a man who did not bring them up, because it was with his cattle that their mother was married.' The sons are almost certain to depart sooner or later and for one reason or another. When their genitor has a legal family of his own they may feel neglected. If he has no legal family of his own it is because he has no cattle. Also he loses all hope of keeping the children if he loses the mother, for they are attached to him through her; and widow-concubines often change their lovers. Nuer say also that 'when a widow-concubine has finished bearing children she has no more use for her lover'. They say further that the lover of a widow has no chance of keeping sons begotten by her dead husband, however good a foster-father he may have been to them. 'A boy who knew his father does not forget him.'

But though children leave their natural father, the tie between him and them is never entirely severed. Even when a genitor has had little to do with his children a mystical tie unites them to him, so that Nuer say that if he is ill-disposed towards them they may suffer injury. Also, a natural son recognizes all the near kin of his genitor as his own kin and they acknowledge him to be their kinsman. When a man has been on intimate terms with his natural children the tie is much stronger. In his district they are called after him. A man may sacrifice a bull in honour of his genitor as well as in honour of his pater, and if his genitor did not beget legal children he may marry a wife to his name. *Liem*, the begging of a gift, is said by Nuer to be the most typical expression of the relationship between a man and his natural father. A father is not likely to refuse his natural son's appeal for help, and if he can, he will assist him to marry. He knows that his generosity will be rewarded by frequent visits.

Something has been said about the relation between sons and fathers in simple legal marriage, ghost-marriage, leviratic marriage, and widow-concubinage. It remains to say a few words about that between a son of an unmarried concubine and his pater. His position is very different from that of the son of a widow-concubine. 'A son of an unmarried concubine is your own son.' So long as you are kind and generous to the boy he will not desert you, for you are both his genitor and his pater and if he leaves you he has no other father to whom he can go. If the mother leaves her lover and goes to live with another man, the father of their children will put no obstacles in the way of their visiting her when they choose. He is confident that a son, even though he is a child, will return to him, 'because he is old enough to know his father, for when his father kills an animal he will keep meat for him to eat, and when food is served in the byre he will call his little son to eat with him'. An unmarried concubine who goes to live with another man will probably remain with this man if she bears him children, but she is likely to return to her first lover to be with her children by him if she bears no children to her second lover. Nevertheless, the son of an unmarried concubine is not so strongly

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bound to his father as a *gat ghok pany*, a true child of cattle, that is to say, a child born of a legal marriage. If a boy born of an unmarried concubine is dissatisfied with his lot in his father's home, or if his father dies, he may go to live with his mother's people.

The personal relations engendered by all these diverse forms of family life present a picture of changing configurations which are most confusing. The flux, movements and comings and goings, we noted in our survey of local communities is here again evident in domestic life; and here again beneath the apparent confusion in personal relations we perceive how in the lineage system the dynamic process is slowed down and stabilized into structure. Individuals and families seem to float about, as it were, and lead an independent existence, but they are anchored always to some lineage by the agnatic principle, which decrees not only that every man must have a pater but that through a pater he must be attached to a lineage. We noted in the first chapter how, if persons become permanently detached from their own lineage, as captured Dinka do, they may attach themselves through female links, regarding them as paternal links, to another lineage, take root in its stem, and become part of its growth.

Here again we observe that the wider groups of paternal kin and lineage gain at the expense of the family, especially when it is a natural and not a legal family. The position of the father in these unions other than that of simple legal marriage is to a greater or lesser degree undermined by attachment of greater legal significance to the pater, who represents the principle of the lineage. Another important consequence, which will be better appreciated later, is the effect of these unions on kinship relations. We have noted that there is a balance in the kinship system between the paternal kin and the maternal kin and that this balance is felt in the pull on children, especially in polygamous households, ~~in both~~ directions. It is particularly evident also in the case of the unions I have described because the splitting of the roles of the father, and in the case of children of unmarried concubines the attachment of children of the same mother to different legal fathers, increases the bias towards the mother's side.

CHAPTER V

KINSHIP

I

682 A MAN's kin are those persons with whom he is genealogically connected through his father and mother. This does not mean that kin relationships are merely an extension of relationships within the family. The kinship system exists in its own right, and a child who is born into a family is born at the same time into a kinship system. Nor does it mean that kin relationships are of the same order as family relationships. They are not—certainly to a Nuer. To him, his father and mother and brothers and sisters are not *mar*, kin, and he does not speak of them as such. They are members of his *gol*, his family, the intimate circle which he sees as something quite distinct from kin, just as we do when we say that someone is a relative and not a member of the family or that another is almost one of the family.

I have said earlier that anyone to whom a man can trace relationship of any kind, or to whom he merely knows that he stands in a certain category of relationship without knowing its degree, is in the wide sense of the Nuer term *mar*, kin to him. I have shown that this means in fact that everybody in his village and those with whom he has dealings outside it are either true kin or are in one way or another treated as such.

Kinship categories are limited in number and they have a definite arrangement to any person. It is not merely that the anthropologist perceives that they have a pattern. The Nuer himself perceives it and can describe it without reference to any particular person, or as an abstract system. Also, when the pattern is enunciated in behaviour and there is no one to fill one of the roles, it is recognized that the actual configuration does not correspond to the ideal configuration, and that it should be made to conform to it by substitution, if this is possible.

In the arrangement of categories, and in the attention paid to them, there is a recognized balance between the kin on the father's side and the kin on the mother's side, and this balance is emphasized on certain formal occasions, above all in the notation of

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bridewealth rights when a marriage is being discussed. When a girl is married the bridewealth is, as we have seen, distributed among the following categories of kin: *gwanlen*, father's brother, *wac*, father's sister, *nar*, mother's brother, *manlen*, mother's sister, *gwandong*, father's father and mother's father, and *mandong*, father's mother and mother's mother. When a man is killed and cattle are paid in compensation, the cattle which are not reserved for marrying a wife to the name of the dead man are divided among the kin on the same principle as obtains for division of bridewealth. When an elephant is killed its tusks, or the cattle obtained for them by exchange, are divided among persons standing in the same set of relationships to the slayers of it. I believe also that when in the old days large numbers of cattle were taken on raids on the Dinka they were similarly divided among the kin of their captor. Though shares in these situations are the *cuong*, right, of the categories of kin I have mentioned, one cannot in any particular instance know for certain to which person a share will go because there may be more than one person standing in a certain category of relationship to a bride, a slain man, a killer of an elephant, or a raider of cattle; or the person to whom it would have gone had he been alive is dead and his right is inherited by his sons. But the right of the relationship is an absolute right. Bridewealth rights, in particular, are the most rigidly formulated of all the privileges of kinship. A man may neglect, elude, or defy the more fluid customary duties to kin without severing the bonds of kinship or even without seriously weakening them, but refusal to give a man the bridewealth cattle to which he is entitled is a total breach of kinship. It is not merely that those who refuse a man his right in this matter would be refused their rights by him when his daughters were married. The refusal cuts a man off from his kin altogether.

These categories of kin are again clearly defined by their representation in the distribution of sacrificial meat at weddings and other important feasts among the family and kin. There are variations in the allocations in different parts of Nuerland, but the same kin are everywhere represented in the distribution. The ideal distribution is usually cited in pairs of relationships in the same manner as the ideal distribution of bridewealth, bloodwealth, and elephant tusks is described: 'The right hindleg is the right of the father's brother and the left hindleg is the right of the

602 mother's brother; the right foreleg is the right of the father's sister and the left foreleg is the right of the mother's sister'; and so forth. In the case of the uncles the allocations are further distinguished by defining whether the recipients are full or paternal half-brothers of father and mother. Some of the kinsmen who have a right to meat may be dead or absent, and it then goes to an heir or to someone standing in the same kinship category as the missing person. On the other hand, there may be several persons of the same category present, in which case the joint is divided among them. The joints may be described by reference to the relationships which have rights in them. On these occasions some of the meat given to a kinsman as his right may be eaten by him and his age-mates together, since a man's age-mates may have secondary rights in it. Representatives of collateral lineages, the *jibuthni*, also have rights in sacrificial meat. When beer is provided on certain ceremonial occasions it is distributed in the same manner as sacrificial meat among the kin on the father's side and the kin on the mother's side, and here again the recipients may share their pots with their age-mates.

Another situation in which the categories of kinship are ceremonially defined is the bringing of gifts at certain sacrifices, particularly those performed when a person has been killed by lightning, at mortuary ceremonies, when a man honours his dead father, and after the birth of twins. I have recorded some of these ceremonies elsewhere.* In describing what happens at a sacrifice in honour of a dead father a Nuer said: 'All your kinsmen are summoned on the day of sacrifice—the sons of your mother's sisters and the sons of your father's sisters, the sons of your mother's brothers and the sons of your father's brothers. Each brings beer to the sacrifice.' This way of speaking of the ceremonial functions of kin is almost a descriptive formula for the several rites I have just mentioned.

Apart from such formal definitions, Nuer speak of their close kinsfolk as their real (*pany*) kin as distinct from more distant kin. 'They are your real kinsfolk, they are the people who help you.' In spite of all disputes and shortcomings, a man's kin assist him in trouble. They help him in the more laborious tasks of his home.

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* 'Customs Relating to Twins among the Nilotic Nuer', *Uganda Journal*, 1936; 'The Nuer *Col Wic*', *Man*, 1949; and 'Burial and Mortuary Rites of the Nuer', *African Affairs*, 1949.

602

They give him support by their presence at his rites. They nurse him when he is sick. They give him food when he or his children are hungry. They assist him to marry, often beyond their obligations, when he is poor, and in certain circumstances others besides those normally asked to contribute cattle will do so: for example, a man's sister's son or a widow-concubine with whom he is living. His kin rush to a man's assistance when he is in danger, the strength of kinship ties being very noticeable when quarrels break out, as they so frequently do in Nuerland, at dances. A man in difficulties then shouts for his kin and they rush to aid him without consideration of how the quarrel may have come about or who might be responsible for it, for he is a father's brother's son, a sister's son, a father's sister's son, or whatever it may be. Consequently those who attack a man must be ready to reckon with his kin also, and a man who cuts himself off from his kin faces disaster. If kinsmen find themselves facing one another in intercommunity fights they move to different positions in the lines to avoid having to fight each other.

It is true that it is particularly the duty of his paternal kin to help a man. It is their duty to avenge him if he is killed. They must hold a mortuary ceremony for his ghost when he dies. They must marry a wife to his name if he dies without male heirs. But if he has no close paternal kin, the kin among whom he has lived may perform these duties towards him. To break kinship (*dakene mar*) with the paternal kin is the worst of misfortunes. The man who does this can no longer claim rights in bridewealth or bloodwealth or sacrificial animals. If he is attacked his kinsmen look the other way, and he knows that if he is killed they will not avenge him. But to deny kinship with any close kin, maternal as well as paternal, is a misfortune. A man who wrongs a kinsman is shamed and he may incur also a curse and ghostly vengeance.

With his kin a man feels at ease. He does not, as we would say, have to keep up appearances with them. This is shown in one way by the manner in which kin swear (*kwith*) at one another. This is particularly the privilege of kin, who hurl the most abusive and obscene expressions at one another. Such behaviour is avoided in the family, though a man might swear mildly at his sister or even at one of his father's wives in anger, and it would almost certainly lead to a fight if an unrelated man were so insulted. Among kin, however, no offence is taken at abuse so long as it is

602 an elder who abuses a younger, as an uncle a nephew, or the two are of the same generation, as between cousins.

The sentiment of *mar*, of communion with his kin, gives a Nuer
612 the comfort of security, the feeling of being in a known and
602 friendly world. I would again stress that *mar* is cognatic kinship, a set of relationships to any person through either father or mother and, among the Nuer, embracing also close affines, and further that in this general interpersonal sense one does not evaluate between the relationships. The maternal uncle is just as much kin as the paternal uncle, and the mother's sister's son as the father's sister's son. They are all people one helps when they need help and who help oneself when one needs aid. '*Jimarida*', 'my kin', are the people who are near me, irrespective of their precise category of relationship, the people on whom I can rely. It is interesting to note that *mar*, like the Old English 'sib', may also have the sense of 'peace'—'*te mar kamdien*', 'they are at peace'—and that it appears also to be the same word as that used for 'my mother'. In a sense all kinship is through the mother, even kinship with the father and hence with the paternal kin.

I have been speaking of the nuclear kin, but, as was noted in Chapter I, there is no limit to the number of relationships a man can in one way or another establish in Nuerland. The kinship system is like a circular elastic band which can be stretched on an ever-widening circumference as a child grows up and increases the number of his social contacts and enlarges the area of their distribution. By this wide recognition of kin a man thus brings in some degree his whole personal society, all those with whom he has dealings, into the circle of relationships in which attitudes and behaviour are shaped by sentiments of kinship.

I shall say more later about kinship in this wider sense and restrict my present remarks to the nuclear kin, which ordinarily can be regarded as the paternal and maternal uncles and aunts and their children and the children of brothers and sisters. A specific kinship term can be used to describe persons in each of these categories, and the relationships they embrace are the prototypes of all kinship ties of the wider kind.

II

These categories of relationship fall into two bread types. The first comprises the agnates, the kin of the byre-side, the 'bulls', as

Nuer would say, who are also referred to collectively and in a 602 general way of speaking as the *gaatgwanlene*, the children of 612 paternal uncles. We have noted how these are divided off as the kin *kwi gwan*, on the father's side (of the family), in division of bridewealth, and also how among themselves they are more or less exempted from the prohibition which defines as incest congress with the wives of kinsmen because their wives are all wives of the lineage. We have further noted that consciousness of being members of a social group with common ancestors and symbols and corporate rights in territory and, within the limited range of nuclear kin, common interests in cattle and wives and common residence pull the children of their wives to the father's side. The second broad type comprises the cognates who are not agnates, the kin on the hut-side, whom Nuer describe collectively and in a general sense as *gaatnyiet*, the children of girls or daughters—that is to say, all kin to whom a man is related through women. Either they are children of daughters of his lineage or he is the son of a daughter of their lineage. Within the restricted range of reference of bridewealth distribution these are the kin *kwi man*, on the mother's side (of the family). They are the kinsmen with whose wives it is incestuous to have congress. We have earlier noted how important this concept is in the network of kinship ties of any Nuer community, with regard both to interpersonal relations and also to the establishing of links with its dominant lineage. I shall have occasion later to emphasize further its significance in this respect in considering the kinship system in relation to society as a whole. The relationships in which these two types are, as it were, summed up and contrasted for a Nuer are that of the *gwanlen*, the paternal uncle, and that of the *nar*, the maternal uncle.

The *gwanlen*, particularly the father's paternal half-brother, is 604 portrayed by Nuer as the wicked uncle and is contrasted with the good uncle, the *nar*, particularly the mother's uterine brother. Both youths and maidens have often told me that they are more at one with their mothers' brothers than with their fathers' brothers and with their mothers' sisters than with their fathers' sisters. 'Wa! Your *nar* is far better (than your *gwanlen*)', said a Nuer to me once, expressing with force this common partiality. When I asked him why the maternal uncle was better he gave no further answer than the usual reply to this question: 'Because he is the brother of your mother'. However, I pressed him for a fuller

604 explanation, and he told me, as I have often heard from other Nuer, that you can rely on your maternal uncle for assistance. Even if your mother is dead he will gladly give you cattle to marry with, because you are the son of his sister and an orphan, whereas your paternal uncle, especially your father's half-brother, helps you reluctantly. If your paternal uncle is angry with you he may split your head open with his club, but however angry with you your maternal uncle may be, he would never strike you, for you are his sister's son.

I have been told time and again that Nuer youths whose fathers have died prefer to live with their maternal uncles, if they are full brothers to their mothers, than with their paternal uncles, though the father's full brother is regarded as a less formidable person than the father's paternal half-brother. The stereotyped portrait of a father's brother in the role of a step-father is of a selfish and mean man. Nuer say that if your father has died while you are still a child and his brother has taken your mother in leviratic union he will be kind to you for your mother's sake while you are a child, but when you grow up he will try to bully you and will be stingy with you. He will favour his own children and neglect you. Even if you are older than his own sons he may try to obtain wives for them first. What is worse, he may try to use your father's cattle and the cattle of your sisters' marriages for this purpose, or to marry another wife for himself, while you are still little and unable to protect your own. Your mother may be weak and consent to this wrong. His wives may give food to their sons who are still small boys while you, a man, have to wait for your portion; and when those boys are grown into men their mothers may hide food for them so that when you have shared the common bowl with them and rise from it still hungry they can eat again in secret and be filled.

A paternal uncle's obligation to assist his nephew to marry is another cause of bad feeling between them. We have noted that payment of bridewealth to kin is a legal obligation which involves the very principle of kinship and may in no way be avoided. The legal title to bridewealth on a girl's marriage implies a moral obligation to contribute cattle, though fewer than those received, to help her brother to marry, but it is an obligation which depends for its strength on personal relations and on ability to assist. It may not be carried out, and if it is not carried out the uncle does not

thereby forfeit his title to bridewealth on the marriages of other 604
sisters. Nevertheless, public opinion would censure a paternal uncle, or his son should he be dead, were he to refuse assistance, especially if, as is normally the case, they are living in the same or nearby homesteads. Paternal uncles are expected to help each of their nephews to marry in turn and to make a more generous contribution—perhaps two or three beasts at each marriage—than that looked for from the maternal uncle, for their nephews are their sons and are marrying wives to their lineage. The bulk of the bridewealth is provided by the family, but as the cattle of married brothers, though owned by them separately, are often herded together and tethered in the same kraal, the contributions by the father and his brothers may come from a single herd. Indeed, in a sense it is not easy to make a rigid distinction between what the father gives and what the uncles give towards the expenses of a marriage. The obligation on uncles is weightiest when they are full brothers of the father, live with or near him, and are on friendly terms with him. A half-brother of the father, especially if they live in different villages or districts, may feel that he has done all that should be required of him if he gives a beast on the marriage of one of his nephews. The younger brothers of the bridegroom must look for help to their other paternal half-uncles when it is their turn to marry.

The rivalry and conflict between paternal kin of which I have 605
spoken comes out most clearly in relations between *gaatgwanlen*,
male ortho-cousins, the sons of brothers, particularly of paternal 593
half-brothers. Enmity between half-brothers is as far as possible suppressed, or at least not given public expression, on account of the father. If brothers disagree they separate, but they try to avoid scandal. Difference of generations inhibits either familiarity or declared hostility between a man and his paternal uncles, but the sons of these uncles are of his own generation and he can be as intimate or quarrelsome with them as he pleases. He is bound to them by ties of loyalty which do not derive from, or depend on, either mutual affection or common affection for a third person, as is the case with half-brothers who share the same father, and which generally necessitate close contact in situations likely sometimes to engender conflict. It is perhaps this contradiction between social bonds and personal feelings which gives rise to the joking or teasing relationship between ortho-cousins.

605 195 I will not discuss here the use of obscene language in general among the Nuer but only the custom called *leng*, conventionalized exchange of obscenities, which is regarded as being pre-eminently a form of behaviour between paternal cousins of the same sex and generation, generally between males, whether they be first cousins or farther removed. It would be most improper for a man to exchange obscenities in this way with other kinsmen. A man says to a paternal cousin '*ban leng*', 'let us have a slanging-game'. Then they abuse each other in turn, prefacing each epithet with the exclamation *awai yah!* The exchange often develops into a contest to see which of the two can continue the longest without repeating himself. As Nuer are practised and have a fertile imagination in such matters, the duel may be kept up for several minutes before one of the men cannot think of an obscenity he has not already used and thus loses the duel, which is closed by shouts of laughter on both sides. The obscenities, which are the most extravagant I have ever heard, cover, with many elaborations, every possible kind of sexual act, the sodomy motif being the most prominent, and refer to the partners to the duel themselves and their fathers, mothers, sisters, paternal and maternal aunts and uncles, grandparents, and sweethearts, though only terms of relationship and not proper names are used. The partners also call one another Dinka, witches, spongers, bastards, gluttons, and so forth. No offence is taken at the foulest sexual references to relatives, though I was told that paternal first cousins ought to avoid mentioning the father and the paternal aunt—'you do not do this because of your father'—and to restrict their observations to the mother and persons on her side of the family. Paternal cousins farther removed appear to feel no embarrassment in mentioning the father and his sister. However, paternal cousins avoid such exchanges in the presence of unrelated persons of the opposite sex.

604 The *wac*, father's sister, is not so prominent in the picture of family portraits as the father's brother because she is generally a member of a different local community, but Nuer say that she is like the father's brother: 'Your *wac* is your *gwanlen* also.' She may treat you badly when you are little, and even if she is kind she does not love you: 'The ones she loves are her grandchildren and the children of her sisters.' A Nuer told me that 'she thinks of you merely as "*gatdemar*" ("son of my brother")', by which he meant that she does not think of you as '*gatda*' ('my son'). She may talk

friendly with you, but really she cares nothing for you and always favours her own children at your expense should you be living at her home. 'Your father's sister blesses you with her mouth, meaning nothing, but she cares nothing for you in her heart.' Nuer contrast her, especially the father's paternal half-sister, with the mother's sister, as they contrast the father's brother with the mother's brother. When you visit her she lets you remain hungry till evening instead of preparing a meal for you at once as a mother's sister would do. They also say that it is very likely she was resentful of your mother and takes it out of you. Nevertheless, a paternal aunt may be asked to assist her nephew to marry and with the consent of her husband, or son, she may contribute a heifer, though she is only likely to do so once. If there are several aunts and several nephews, one of the aunts will be asked for assistance on the marriage of one nephew and another aunt on the marriage of another nephew. Moreover, though the father's sister belongs to the 'bulls', her children are 'children of daughters' and the relationship of father's sister's son has the kindlier associations of this type of kinship.

It is only fair to say that the account given above is a gross distortion of the usual relations of a man with his paternal uncles and aunts, and indeed Nuer readily accept that they may be harmonious. They admit that many an orphan finds a true father in his father's brother and a true mother in his father's sister. They say that much depends on the character of the person concerned, the temper of relations between uncle or aunt and father and mother, and above all whether father and uncle have lived together, which often enough means whether they were full brothers, for then the uncle is one of those who has brought his brother's son up from childhood and regards him as much a son as a nephew.

I would remark here that, as was noted in our review of Nuer ideas about incest, though all paternal uncles and aunts are agnates, those who are uterine brothers and sisters of the father, while not, of course, in the Nuer sense of the word *gaatnyiet*, seem to partake in a kind of way of the quality of kinship through women just as, in a higher degree, the uterine brother does, for their kinship with the father is both on the byre-side and on the hut-side. They share with the father not only his paternal kin but his maternal kin also.

602 Nevertheless, distortion though it may be, it is a distortion which by over-emphasizing certain features of relationship on the paternal side brings out one of their essential characteristics, the personal rivalries generated by corporate life and common interests. It is understandable that those who live together have many opportunities for quarrelling and that their common interests, especially in regard to cattle in which they all have rights, provide occasion for it. A Nuer is bound to his paternal kin from whom he derives aid, security, and status, but in return for these benefits he has many obligations and commitments. Their often indefinite character may be both evidence of, and a reason for, their force, but it also gives ample scope for disagreement. Duties and rights easily conflict. Moreover, the privileges of agnatic kinship cannot be divorced from authority, discipline, and a strong sense of moral obligation, all of which are irksome to Nuer. They do not deny them, but they kick against them when their personal interests run counter to them. We noted in the last chapter that Nuer realize that the paternal half-brother relationship is one in the nature of which there are cleavage and opposition. In the nephew-paternal uncle and the ortho-cousin relationships the opposition is perhaps less tense because the persons belong to different families and households and their interests are more divergent, and because less effort has to be made to repress antagonisms. In their interrelations we have in embryo and between persons the same complementary tendencies towards fission and fusion that we find between opposed segments in the lineage system which derives from these paternal relationships as branches derive from twigs on a tree. We shall later see how the relation of the agnatic type of kinship to the type of relationship through women, and the relation of the lineage system to the whole society, are of the same pattern. First we must consider the categories of kinship on the mother's side of the family.

604 Nuer say of the maternal uncle that he is both father and mother, but most frequently that 'he is your mother'. He is a man's great supporter when he is in trouble. If a youth has committed adultery or involved himself in some other trouble, and his father's people refuse to aid him, he goes to his maternal uncle for help. He will help his sister's son for his mother's sake. Nuer say also that 'your maternal uncle will give you a cow and its calf to start a herd, and more cattle when you marry'. Indeed, he is expected

at any time to give you a goat or a spear, or even a cow if he can 604
afford it, when you are in need of these things, though you ought some day to make return to him. The relationship between sister's son and mother's brother is one of tenderness. Nuer have often told me how indulgent a mother's brother is with the little children of his sisters. They say, for example, that if a boy living at his maternal uncle's home feels out of sorts and does not want to spread out the cattle-dung to dry in the sun or to perform some other domestic task of boyhood, and the sons of the home think he is shirking work and abuse him, their father will admonish them to leave his sister's child in peace. If this happened at the home of a paternal uncle he would support his own sons and upbraid his nephew for laziness and even beat him. If a man's father is dead and his father's brothers have few cattle or are unfriendly towards him, he may go to live with his maternal uncle, and the uncle's wife will cook for him. He may even marry from the uncle's herd. Also, a youth during his father's lifetime often visits his mother's kinsmen and stays with them for weeks together. A Nuer lad has always a second home if his maternal uncle is a full brother to his mother. A mother's half-brother is regarded as a more distant person.

A man particularly looks for assistance from his mother's brothers when he wants to marry. If a mother's full brother likes his sister's eldest son he may give him two or three cows to help him get a wife, and he may make further contributions on the marriages of the younger sons. However, as in the case of the paternal half-uncle, a maternal half-uncle considers that he has done his duty if he assists one son of his sister's family to marry. He expects his next nephew to marry to approach his brothers for help. Even a maternal full uncle is not obliged to contribute to his nephew's bridewealth. If he refuses aid he cannot be deprived of cattle on the marriages of the young man's sisters. Any assistance he may give is regarded as an act of friendship and not as a return for the cattle he receives. The only cattle the mother's people are obliged to pay to her sons are a male and a female calf, which in eastern Nuerland are known as the *ghok jookni*, the cattle of the ghosts. This claim becomes due when the mother has reached the menopause.

The mother's brother-sister's son relationship is marked by a 604
number of special observances. A youth at his initiation may ask 784

604 784 his maternal uncle—generally it would be the mother's uterine brother—for a bull-calf with the markings of the new ox-name he has taken. Though he cannot demand it as a right, he may curse his uncle's herd so that the male calves die if he is refused his request. It seems that the customary way of making this request is for the nephew to make an incision on the ear of the calf he [764] desires. A man may not bury his maternal uncle, and I believe that a mother's brother should not bury his sister's son. Were a man to [753] bury his maternal uncle he would die of *keth nara*, a disease which is said to cause white patches on the skin. The same disease may attack a man who hears that his maternal uncle has been wounded or cut himself severely and does not visit him and place some of the blood on his foot. Should the nephew not hear of the uncle's wound and contract the disease, he visits him and gets him to rub soot from the bottom of a pot on the affected surfaces. A man and [231] his maternal uncle may not tether their cattle together in the same kraal, though the cattle may graze together. If one of the uncle's beasts dies the nephew may not skin it, for were he to do so he would destroy the uncle's herd and people would say that 'he had spilt the cattle of his uncle to the ground'. An uncle may not give his sister's son a spear-shaft, for the gift might cause him [513] serious injury. A man and his sister's son must not use the same sleeping-hide or sleep in the same hut. These rules, especially those which forbid a man tethering his cattle in his uncle's kraal, skinning his uncle's beasts, and sleeping in the same hut as his uncle, seem almost designed to keep the two apart, to prevent a youth identifying himself with his maternal kin instead of with his paternal kin.

604 788 The maternal uncle is the kinsman who most often blesses a lad in the Nuer way of blessing, by spitting on the head. Grandparents may sometimes do this, but other relatives rarely. If a man comes frequently to visit his sister and partakes of her hospitality and does not occasionally spit on her child's head, the child may get the disease I have mentioned above. It is also said that when a maternal uncle rises during the day from a nap in the ashes of the hearth and his sister's son rubs the ashes off his back he must then spit on the lad's head. But if the blessing of a 604 789 maternal uncle is desired, his curse is believed to be among the worst, if not the worst, a Nuer can receive, for, unlike the father, a maternal uncle may curse a youth's cattle, as well as his crops

and fishing and hunting, if he is disobedient or refuses a request 604
or in some other way offends him. The curse may also prevent the 789
nephew from begetting male children. Nuer therefore, however angry they may be, avoid swearing at their maternal uncles: 'Above all you must not swear at your maternal uncle. You might even think of swearing at your father but never, never, at your maternal uncle.'

It is the privilege of a maternal uncle's wife to swear abusively 604
at her husband's sister's son. She does this teasingly and not in 601
anger. He will not answer her back unless he is of about her age. A mother's brother's wife is often addressed by the anomalous term '*mandong*', 'grandmother', though '*ma*', 'mother', may also be used. When so addressed she answers her husband's sister's son as '*gatnyimar*', 'son of my sister', or '*gatnyieti*', 'son of daughters', 'on account of her husband whose sister bore him', and not as 'grandson'. Nuer have given me two reasons for this usage. I was told that 'after the mother of your mother has died she (your maternal uncle's wife) turns herself into something like your grandmother'. This corresponds to a man calling his wife's elder sister 'mother' when his mother-in-law is dead and respecting her as a mother-in-law. I was also told that 'you call her (your maternal uncle's wife) *mandong* (grandmother) because if he (your maternal uncle) dies you may take his wife'. Though in my experience this seldom happens, the second explanation is consistent with another anomalous usage, the description by a woman of her husband's sister as '*mancoada*', which means literally 'mother of my husband', and of the son and daughter of her husband's sister as '*gatmancoada*' and '*nyamancoada*', 'my husband's mother's son' and 'my husband's mother's daughter'. In spite of these explanations it may be suggested that these peculiarities of behaviour and language relating to the maternal uncle's wife may be most appropriately interpreted in terms of the position of the maternal uncle in the kinship system.

The many observances relating to the mother's brother-sister's son relationship are indicative of this position, a further indication perhaps being the fact that, as will be seen in the following section, he alone among kinsfolk is not usually addressed by terms proper to the family. He is not, of course, strictly speaking a *gatnyiet* to his sister's son, but the relationship is one of this kind because his sister's children are *gaatnyiet* to him and his sons. Also in a

604 general sense, in contrast to the 'bulls', the maternal uncle is a
relative through a female, the mother. Indeed, he is spoken about
601 by Nuer as a kind of male mother himself. The significance of his position is due to the fact already drawn attention to, that there is a pull on a man in two directions in the Nuer kinship system, towards his father's kin and away from them towards his maternal kin, a tension especially marked in the case of an eldest child and in polygamous and concubinary families.

604 This balance is, as we have seen, very marked in the Nuer kinship system. When one lives among Nuer the relationships of *gwanlen, nar, wac, manlen,* and their children are hardly ever out of one's mind, for there are few conversations in which one or other of them does not figure; and in all discussions of a formal or ceremonial nature they go in pairs of opposites, the paternal uncle with the maternal uncle, the paternal aunt with the maternal aunt, and the sons of the one with the sons of the other. The balance between father's kin and mother's kin is always maintained on important occasions of social life, such as marriages, settlements of feuds, and religious feasts, when relationships are formally defined.

604 The balance is felt also by Nuer in their everyday life, and it
602 strongly affects the relationships. A mother's brother, for example, is not just a mother's brother. He is, so to speak, a mother's brother and not a father's brother; and the fact that a man has a mother's brother towards whom he can turn in trouble affects his relations with his paternal kin. Relationships are tinged with their opposites. This is not a mere relation of opposites within a formal pattern. We have constantly noted throughout this book the very powerful and frequent attraction of the maternal kin in such a practical question as where a man resides. We have seen that a first-born ought to be brought up by his maternal grandparents; that fatherless young men often go to live with their maternal uncles; that youths frequently stay with their mother's people; that attraction to the maternal kin is accentuated by one or other form of concubinage; and that men easily identify themselves through female links with the lineage with whom they reside. A man has always the choice of several homes, and if he does not care to reside with his paternal kin he can attach himself to the home of other male or female kinsfolk. It is generally towards his mother's brother's people that he turns his eyes when

he has disputes with his paternal kin or feels unhappy among them. I had the impression that Nuer, who often talk about it, are very conscious of this pull away from the paternal kin which is personified in the maternal uncle. It signifies not only a balance between paternal and maternal kin within the kinship system but also a balance between the lineage and the society which contains it—between the lineage system and the total social structure. 604 602

The relationship between the *gaatnar*, the children of the mother's brother, and the *gaatwac*, the children of the father's sister, who belong to different lineages and, usually, different local communities, is considered by Nuer to be one of easy companionship. Friendship between a man and the sons of his maternal uncle is not blended with the reserve which difference of generation introduces into his relationship with their father. However, the tension personified in the mother's brother cannot but to some extent affect the relationship with his sons. The sons of the mother's brother are the counterpart to the agnatic cousins, the sons of the father's brother, and the two relationships seem for Nuer to stand in opposition. 605

It remains to say a few words about the *manlen*, the mother's sister. Nuer say of her that she is like the mother's brother, that 'she is your mother', and that she will love you as a son. 'Your mother's sister is your friend. Is she not the sister of your mother?' If you live at her home she will not, like the father's sister, favour her own children at your expense. You are her son and you will eat with her own child and share and share alike with him like brothers. When you visit her from a distance she sees that you are hungry from your journey and at once leaves off what she was doing to prepare a meal for you, and she pours her best butter over the porridge she has prepared for you. It is the mother's sister relationship that Nuer mostly invoke when hurling their spears in hunting and fishing: '*Tet cueda malene*', 'My right hand, my mother's sisters.' This is equal to the *moc*, the invocation of a favourite ox. A mother's sister, like a father's sister, will be asked to contribute a heifer on the marriage of one of her nephews, but she, also, will not be expected to contribute again on the marriage of another son of the same sister. I was told that when a mother's sister dies her nephew may not visit her grave without a goat for sacrifice. 604

The mother's sister-sister's son relationship belongs to the

604 *gaatnyiet* category, for the children of each of two sisters are children of the daughters of the lineage to the other. Of all Nuer relationships it is the one of the most unadulterated benevolence. The two women and their children may generally be expected to live in different local communities, so that their interrelations are limited to friendly visits. There are none of the elements of opposition which make the relationship of mother's brother to sister's son more complex and explosive. The husbands of the sisters are not likely to be near kinsmen. There are between them none of the bridewealth transactions which complicate the mother's brother-sister's son relationship. There is no pull on the children towards the mother's sister as there is towards the mother's brother and the maternal kinsmen who live in the mother's home. It is perhaps because of the simple affection that the relationship implies to Nuer that *gatmalen*, son of my mother's sister, is a form of address sometimes used to unrelated friends whom a man wishes nevertheless to address by some kinship term.

III

000 I have been speaking up to the present of relations between close kin, the nuclear kin, who fall in relation to any particular person into a limited number of categories of relationship. These categories make a pattern which we call the kinship system. It was shown in the first chapter how all the members of a person's community are kin (including affines in this term) to him in one way or another, that is, they can all be placed in one or other of these categories. Clearly they are kin in a more remote sense. It is to this more general aspect of the kinship system that I now turn. It is perhaps most conveniently approached in the conventional manner of anthropological writings by an examination of the use of kinship terms.

601 Nuer kinship terms can be used descriptively to speak of any particular relationship, either with or without reference to a particular person. The construction of these terms is simple, e.g. the father's sister's daughter is *nyawac* (*nya*, daughter, *wac*, father's sister) and the mother's brother's son is *gatnar* (*gat*, son, *nar*, mother's brother). One can combine the primary terms to describe any relationship, e.g. *gatnyawac*, father's sister's daughter's son (*gat*, son, *nya*, daughter, *wac*, father's sister), and

gatgatnar, mother's brother's son's son (*gat*, son, *gat*, son, *nar*, mother's brother). The terms can, indeed, be presented in a perfectly symmetrical form, for it is correct, though unusual, to say in Nuer *gwanman* (*gwan*, father, *man*, mother) or *gwangwan* (*gwan*, father, *gwan*, father) when speaking of the mother's father or of the father's father if one particularly wishes to distinguish between the maternal and paternal grandfathers; or one can say *demangwan* (*deman*, uterine brother, *gwan*, father) or *gatgwangwan* (*gat*, son, *gwan*, father, *gwan*, father) in speaking of the father's uterine brother or of his paternal half-brother if one wishes to emphasize the distinction, though here again the usage would be cumbersome and uncommon. In fact, it is possible to describe any relationship by combinations of the family terms *gwan*, father, *man*, mother, *deman*, brother, *nyiman*, sister, *gat*, son, and *nya*, daughter, though it would be unusual to describe, for example, the *wac*, father's sister, as *nyimangwan*, sister (daughter of the mother) of the father. Conjugal relationships are very simply indicated by the prefixes *co*, husband, and *ciek*, wife, e.g. *cowac*, husband of the father's sister, and *ciekgatmanlen*, wife of the son of the mother's sister. The husband's affinal relations are denoted by the words for members of the family suffixed by *thu*, e.g. *manthu*, mother-in-law, *nyimanthu*, sister-in-law. The same terms are used for the wife's parents-in-law, but, as we have earlier noted, her husband's brother is her *cocang* and his sister her *mancoa*.

When a Nuer speaks about his family and kin and affines he uses these terms in a slightly different, the possessive, form, e.g. '*gwadong*', 'my grandfather' (paternal and maternal), '*mar*', 'my mother', '*nyimar*', 'my sister', '*gatda*', 'my son', '*wacda*', 'my father's sister', '*nara*', 'my mother's brother', '*gwathu*', 'my wife's (husband's) father', '*conyimar*', 'my sister's husband', &c.

When he addresses them, as in greeting them, he normally uses, and in many cases ought to use, an even simpler nomenclature. Both grandfathers are addressed as '*gwadong*' (or '*gwandong*') and both grandmothers as '*madong*' (or '*mandong*'). The father, his brothers, his paternal cousins, and the husbands of all kinswomen of his and the mother's generation are addressed as '*gwa*', 'father', or sometimes by the respectful form '*gwadin*'; so also are the male kinsmen and affines of the wife by her husband and the male kinsmen and affines of the husband by his

601 wife if they belong to an older generation. A man addresses his mother, his father's other wives, the wives of his father's brothers and paternal cousins, his father's sisters, his mother's sisters, and the wives of all maternal kinsmen of an older generation as *'ma'*, 'mother', or sometimes by the respectful form *'madin'*, as well as by such terms as *'wacda'*, 'my father's sister', and *'malen'*, 'my mother's sister'. Also, all those women his wife addresses as *'ma'*, 'mother', among her relatives and affines are addressed by the same term by her husband, and all those women the husband calls *'ma'* among his relatives and affines his wife calls *'ma'* also. The maternal uncle is addressed as *'nar'*. A man addresses his brothers and sisters and the sons and daughters of his father's and mother's kinsmen and kinswomen of their generation as *'demar'* (or *'gatmar'*), 'my (uterine) brother', and *'nyimar'*, 'my (uterine) sister', as well as by such terms as *'gatwac(da)'*, 'son of (my) father's sister', *'nyanar'*, 'daughter of (my) mother's brother', and *'gatmalen'*, 'son of my mother's sister'. He may likewise address the husbands of kinswomen and the wives of kinsmen as 'brother' and 'sister' if they are of his generation instead of by such terms as *'conyimar'*, 'husband of my sister', and *'ciekdemar'*, 'wife of my brother'. A man addresses his wife's kinsfolk and affines of her generation and she addresses his kinsfolk and affines of his generation by the same terms. Sons and daughters are addressed as *'gatda'*, 'my son', and *'nyada'*, 'my daughter', and the sons and daughters of all members of the speaker's paternal and maternal kin of his generation may be addressed by the same terms as well as by *'gatdemar'*, 'son of my brother', *'nyademar'*, 'daughter of my brother', *'gatnyimar'*, 'son of my sister', and *'nyanyimar'*, 'daughter of my sister'. The children of affines, and of their affines, of the speaker's generation are also habitually addressed as 'son' and 'daughter', and also their spouses. The children of those addressed as *'gatda'* and *'nyada'* are generally addressed by the same terms, though the son's son may be addressed as *'gatdoda'* and I believe that the daughter's daughter is sometimes addressed as *'nyadoda'*.

In other words, all kinsfolk—paternal, maternal, and affinal—of an ascending generation, except the mother's brother, and even he sometimes, are commonly addressed as *'gwa'*, 'father', or *'ma'*, 'mother' (*'gwadong'*, 'grandfather', and *'madong'*, 'grandmother', being only variations meaning 'aged father' and 'aged mother');

all kinsfolk of the speaker's generation are commonly addressed as '*demar*' (or '*gatmar*'), 'my uterine brother', or '*nyimar*', 'my uterine sister'; and all kinsfolk of the descending generation are commonly addressed as '*gatda*', 'my son', or '*nyada*', 'my daughter'.

Even within the family and close kin Nuer use kinship terms so unprecisely that it is only possible to know more or less, when one hears a term used, the type of relationship referred to. A man may be described as '*deman* Cam', 'Cam's uterine brother', when he is in fact his paternal half-brother, or as '*gwan*', his 'father', when he is in fact his father's brother. A man may describe his relationship to a woman by saying that she is '*nyimar*', 'my sister', or '*nyamalen*', 'my mother's sister's daughter'; or he may use both terms, indicating his relationship to her both less and more precisely: '*Nyamemo e nyimar, e nyamalen*', 'That girl is my sister, is my mother's sister's daughter.' A man may address his maternal uncle as '*nara*', 'my maternal uncle', or as '*gwa*', 'father', and the uncle may reply '*gatnyimar*', 'my sister's son', or '*gatnyieti*', 'son of daughters', or '*gatda*', 'my son'. Choice of terms is influenced by the age and genealogical propinquity of the persons concerned. A man may address his *gatnyawac*, the son of his father's sister's daughter, as '*gatnyada*', 'son of my daughter', and the man may then reply '*gwadong*', 'my grandfather', but they will also, and usually, address one another as '*demar*', 'my brother', if they are of about the same age. If a man addresses another of about his age as 'grandfather' he does so jestingly, even though the man in fact stands to him in a classificatory sense in this relationship, e.g. is a member of his maternal grandmother's clan. Although a man may stand to another as maternal uncle in that he is a member of his mother's lineage and of her generation, he is unlikely to address him by the term '*nar*', 'mother's brother', unless he is closely related to his mother. He is more likely to address him by the general term of respect '*gwa*', 'father'.

In spite of this vagueness there is discernible in the use by Nuer of their kinship terms a tendency, so general as to be a convention, to place kinsmen in a category of relationship nearer to the speaker than their genealogical relationship to him. As I explained in the last chapter, a man almost invariably uses '*demar*' (or '*gatmar*'), 'my uterine brother', when speaking to, or about, his paternal half-brother instead of '*gatgwar*', 'my father's son', a term he keeps for the sons of his paternal uncles. He uses '*gatgwalen*', 'son of my father's brother', for more distant cousins, members of his lineage and clan of his generation. To use *'gatgwalen'* in ordinary conversation for your actual father's brother's son suggests that your relations with him are not cordial. Likewise, to speak to this man's father as *'gwalen'*, 'my father's brother', instead of *'gwa'*, 'father', is suggestive of coldness in the relationship. The same tendency is observable in the use of terms for relatives on the mother's side also. A man calls his mother's sister's son *'gątmar'*, 'son of my mother', and keeps *'gatmalen'*, 'son of my mother's sister', for more distant maternal cousins, or as a courtesy term for unrelated persons. It is bad form to use the correct term for a near kinsman. They say that it is cutting the *gol*, the hearth, off from the *wec*, camp, that is to say, it is drawing a distinction between members of your family and members of the community of kin among whom you live.

Nuer say that when a man uses kinship terms in their exact and literal sense it is because he wishes to stress the precise relationship in which a man stands to him in order to evoke from him some action which is contained in the pattern of behaviour the relationship carries. It generally means that the speaker is asking for a gift or favour: *'Bi e lim ka duob maridun'*, 'You beg for it in the path of your kinship'. Another way of making the same emphasis is by using the *cyot gwan* or *cyot man*, calling the man after the proper name of his father or mother. One also hears the correct usages on ceremonial occasions. One hears them also at dances, for it is then customary for youths to shout them out formally to kinsmen. On such occasions, and as a complimentary usage in chatting, one hears the otherwise rarely used term *'degwar'*, 'son of my father'—the correlative to *'demar'*, 'son of my mother', as *'gatgwar'* is to *'gatmar'*—though it would only be used for paternal cousins and not for the real father's son. I was told that one would also use this term to stress an agnatic link if one required assistance in fighting. The exact usages are also heard when grown-ups or older children are talking to small children about their elders and wish to impress on them the precise relationship in which they stand to them. In like manner, members of the forms of family other than the simple legal family use the same terms of address to one another as members of a simple legal family do, except in such legal or ritual situations as seem to require indication of legal status.

Ordinarily, with near kin relationships are contracted. The person addressed is taken out of a more distant category of relationship and placed in a more intimate one, but he can be telescoped back again to his genealogical position on occasions. When a Nuer calls a paternal uncle 'father' he is avoiding excluding him from the family circle by calling him 'father's brother'. For this reason terms of relationship are of greater significance among the extra-family kin than they are in the family itself, where intimacy between its members is so self-evident that if any mode of address is required some other mode is commonly employed, such as the use of personal names.

As Nuer have only a limited number of terms of relationship, they have to ring the same changes with them whether a relationship is more or less remote. A paternal cousin six times removed is a *gatgwanlen* no less than a first paternal cousin and can equally be addressed by the terms '*gatgwar*', 'son of my father', or '*demar*', 'my uterine brother'. The son of a woman of my mother's clan is '*gatmalen*', 'my mother's sister's son', whether he is a first cousin or of unknown genealogical distance, and he will equally be addressed as '*gatmar*' or '*demar*', 'my uterine brother'. Again, any member of the wife's father's or mother's clans is a *gwanthu*, father-in-law, and will therefore be addressed as '*gwa*', 'father'. Consequently a kinship term, even when used in its right place, can only denote the category of relationship and not its degree. Moreover, the relationship need not be of a direct personal kind at all but may derive from a link between lineages of any distance back. When a man of one lineage has married a woman of another lineage some generations ago all his descendants by her can be regarded, should anyone care to remember the marriage, as *gaatwac*, children of the paternal aunt, or *gaatnyiet*, children of sisters, by the men of the second lineage, and they can be regarded as *gaatnar*, children of the maternal uncle, by the men of the first. Likewise, lineages descended from sisters can regard each other as *gaatmanlen*, children of the mother's sister. There are so many cross-strands in Nuer society that a man can always find some relationship to another man should he care to do so, and hence place him in one or other of the categories of the kinship system and address him by a term appropriate to this category. Nuer squeeze all members of their communities, all those whom they meet often, into the system somehow. For example, I once asked a Nuer lad why he referred to another man as '*gatgwar*', 'son of

601 my father', and he replied: 'He is my father's brother's son (*gatgwalen*)'. As I knew that the two men were either not at all or very distantly related, I asked how this could be. The lad then said that the man was 'a son of my father's distant brother (*gàtgwalen ka noni*)'—a distant paternal cousin—and he added: 'He has lived so long among us that I call him "son of my father" ("*gatgwar*"). He has become my father's son. Also, his father and mine were of the same age-set.'

601 561 The example I have given introduces a complication, for, quite apart from the kinship system, every adult in Nuer society can be addressed by one of the family relationship terms in virtue of his position in the age-set system. As I have described this system elsewhere it need here be considered only in so far as it is immediately relevant to the subject of kinship. Males are divided into the grades of boys and men, boys being initiated by successive sets into manhood by a severe ordeal. Without discussing the intricacies of the system it may be said that this arrangement of males by age means that from the point of view of any individual man all the other men of his society are formally classed as seniors, equals, and juniors, the division corresponding roughly to three generations —the older, his own, and the younger. To seniors he must show deference, with his equals he is on free and easy terms, and from his juniors he expects deference. Women are brought within the system as being daughters, sisters, and wives of members of sets. The age-set system thus supplements the kinship system in the organization of interpersonal relations in everyday social life. Again without going into details, men of an older generation within the system are 'fathers' and their sisters and wives are 'mothers', men of a man's own generation are 'brothers' ('sons of the father' or 'sons of the mother') and their sisters and wives are 'sisters', and men of a junior generation are his 'sons' and their sisters and wives are his 'daughters'. People address one another accordingly, except that men of the same generation usually salute one another by their ox-names. Thus everybody in Nuerland can be addressed as 'father', 'mother', 'brother', 'sister', 'son', or 'daughter' by reference to their position in the age-set system, and this usage may be regarded as a special instance, and one of the widest radius, of the classificatory use of relationship terms. All men of a man's father's age-set are his 'fathers', and all sons of a man's age-mates are his 'sons', and so forth. A man even speaks

collectively of members of a set senior to his own, other than his father's set, as in-laws if they are senior enough for it to be likely that he will marry one of their daughters. In a sense everybody in the age-set system—that is to say, everybody in Nuerland in one way or another—is kin to everybody else, and the word *mar*, kinship, can be used in this connexion: *mar rica*, age-set kin. The use of relationship terms for persons within the system may in part—the common use of personal names may be another reason—account for the very informal, even haphazard, use of kinship terms among the Nuer, for the terminology of address of the age-sets may cut across that of kinship. For example, a man may be to another a classificatory paternal uncle or grandfather genealogically, but if he is of the same generation he is his 'brother' and would so address him and be addressed by him. Contradiction between the two systems is avoided by the assimilation of the values of both to those of the family by the use of the family relationship terms, for though one may not know whether a man is being addressed as 'father' in virtue of his place in the kinship system or in the age-set system, it could never happen that a term appropriate in the one would be inappropriate in the other. It is always correct to address very old persons as 'grandfather' and 'grandmother', persons of one's parents' generation as 'father' and 'mother', persons of one's own generation as 'brother' and 'sister', and persons of the generations of one's children and their children as 'son' and 'daughter'; and this usage may be quite independent of either kinship or age-sets, being merely a courtesy extension of the family terms to all men. 601 561

All members of a man's community, whether it be large or small, can thus be addressed by one of the family relationship terms. We do not, I think, understand this convention so well by regarding it, as it is often regarded, as an extension of family terms and sentiments from members of the family to kin as when we regard it as the verbal telescoping of kin into the circle of family reference so that, as Nuer say, the *gol* is not cut off from the *wec*, the hearth from the camp, the family from the community. A man belongs not only to his family but to a wider society.

IV

The classificatory use of terms of relationship is a special problem to be considered separately from the wide recognition of 601

,601 kinship from which it derives. A Nuer, as has been reiterated, establishes a kinship tie with all with whom he has frequent intercourse. Consequently a *ram mo gwagh*, an unrelated person, is a relative term. It signifies a person to whom a man has no genealogical position close enough to prevent intermarriage between their families, someone with whom, even if he could trace relationship, it would be remote. To all intents and purposes he is not kin but a stranger, which amounts to saying that he is neither a close kinsman nor a member of one's immediate local community, that one does not stress a kinship link with him because one has no close social relations with him. Ultimately and potentially everybody is kin, or can be made to appear so if circumstances demand. This is understandable in a society where kinship values are the only guide in interpersonal relations. When a man has constant intercourse with another it is therefore necessary that each be in some category of kinship in respect of the other so that each may have a rough-and-ready guide to the kind of behaviour expected of him and which he may expect from the other. The categories of the kinship system give him only a formal pattern of relationships, and the content of each relationship depends on genealogical distance, proximity of residence, personal feelings, and other factors. But they enable him to systematize his social contacts, to place everybody in a definite position in relation to himself, and so to have the security of living in an ordered world.

Now, as we have noted, these kinship values tend to fall into two broad types, the agnatic type and the type through women. The first is characterized by common group interests and a certain hardness between those who share them, and the second by lack of common group interests and the absence of the jealousies and disharmonies they entail, being no more than a set of separate personal relationships. Relationships of the first type harden into lineage structure, those of the second type remain on an interpersonal kinship footing. This means that a Nuer's contacts with all persons outside the agnatic groups to which he belongs are on a pattern the common design of which is one of tenderness, an attenuated benevolence of family sentiments; and this includes both immediate relationships between persons through female links and, in a lesser degree, relationships between persons through lineage links of the same category at some more or less distant point of time. Thus members of the same lineage are bound to each other by common descent, by ritual ties, by common cattle-interests, by the duty of blood-revenge and other moral obligations, by association with a common territory, and so forth, while they are united within the wider society to persons, and as a group to other lineages, by multiple ties of kinship, all of which lack the ambivalence of agnatic kinship. We have noted, moreover, that the Nuer lineage is not merely a descent group but is a descent group with political functions. It may not therefore be too fanciful to suggest that the agnatic type of kin relationships is associated with the autonomy of political segments and their structural opposition to one another—the process of fission, and the non-agnatic type of kin relationships is associated, through a complex network of ties of this type, with the wider social system which binds these segments together and contains them—the process of fusion. The one set of attitudes emphasizes the singularity and exclusiveness of the agnatic group, in terms of which political values are expressed, and the other emphasizes the community life in which such groups are merged.

In ultimate analysis it might be held that the in-groups, the lineages, and the political units associated with them carry the sentiment of the father-son relationship, and the total community comprised within the multiple strands of the kinship system carries the sentiment of the mother-son relationship. I do not myself hold to such a psychological reduction. I do not think it is true that there are such simple and opposite feelings towards father and mother or that the attitudes to parents are extended to kinsfolk in so simple a manner. I prefer a sociological interpretation in terms of jural relations within the Nuer social system.

I have tried to show in *The Nuer* how the lineage system provides the framework of their political system through the association of lineages with tribal segments, and in this book how, when we examine the constitution of each such segment, we find that it consists of a network of interpersonal kinship ties which connect all its members to one another and directly or indirectly to its dominant lineage, thereby giving to the lineage its corporate character. It is the interaction of the lineage principle with the values of the kinship system which makes any neighbourhood or residential group structurally significant. Through the fusion of all elements into the dominant lineage within each local community, when the community functions as a political unit, the

601 lineage system becomes the organizing principle of the political structure of the wider society which contains it.

The antithesis between kinship and neighbourhood made by Maine and Morgan can therefore be only a logical one and may easily be misleading. Kinship values and political values based on locality are interdependent. All who live together express their relations to one another in terms of the kinship system, and they express their collective interests as a unit in the political system in terms of the lineage system to which they are attached by various kinship ties. The internal network of kinship links gives the local community the cohesion necessary for it to function as a political unity, but it is also true that it is because people are living together that kinship between them is emphasized and effective in the ordering of their interrelations. Hence it is that individuals stress whatever category of kinship is most significant in the particular circumstances of residence in which at any time they find themselves. People do not live together unless they are kin, but kinship is made effective by living together. But though interconsistent, the political system and the kinship system are not only different kinds of system but are on different levels of abstraction. The whole society can be regarded as a network of strands of relationship which regulates relations between persons throughout Nuerland, or can be viewed as a set of relations between local groups in which these strands are ordered by the lineage system into corporate collectivities on the basis of territorial distribution.

In every primitive society we find both family groups and a politically organized society in which they are contained and without which they could not maintain themselves. The values of each affect the other in a two-way movement. The kinship system derives from the family, being, through marriage, built up of a series of families, and it has among the Nuer, as we have seen, an almost limitless extension, at any rate in the sense that everyone can in one way or another and in some degree be placed in a kinship category by everybody else and addressed by them by a kinship term which in common usage is a family relationship term. The whole society is, in this sense, one great family. It has been noted that *mar*, kinship, also means 'my mother', and that this is perhaps significant because all kinship, even with the father and hence with the paternal kin, is through the mother; and in this general sense of kinship one does not grade its categories but gives them equivalence.

The impress of the structural form of the wider society on the kinship system and the family group is no less important. It determines, at any rate to some extent, the emphasis placed on categories of relationship and how far kinship, and therefore descent, are traced through father and mother. It is evident that in Nuer lineages, as I have explained at length in *The Nuer*, agnatic kinship has an extension and depth correlative to their political functions. It may also be suggested that the pull in opposite directions, towards the paternal kin and towards the maternal kin, to which attention has been drawn, is related to the lineage system. The fissiparous tendencies of the lineage system give particular value to the distinction between full brothers and paternal half-brothers in both family and kin, and hence also to the polygamous family and to the position of wives in it. The supremacy of the agnatic principle which the lineage system embodies, also, it has been suggested, by subordinating the roles of the family and of the father to the interests of the wider groups of paternal kin and the lineage, allows the many variants of forms of the family which are so common in Nuerland, and also the widespread adoption of Dinka, the easy translation of affinal and age-set ties into the values of the kinship system, considerable social mobility, and high status of women. All these features seem to be interconsistent.

It may also be suggested that the balance between paternal and maternal kin and in general the equivalence given to all relationships in the kinship system in ordinary social life is related to the lineage system. As we have seen, Nuer lineages are dispersed groups and a man's neighbours belong for the most part to lineages other than his own. Therefore, since Nuer move freely and far, they must trace kinship widely through female links, particularly on the mother's side, as well as agnatically, if they are to make the attachments to persons and lineages which local associations demand, and so live in an ordered world in which every person can be placed in some relationship. The size of a man's local community and the degree of his mobility in it—his social space—affect the manner and range of his counting of kinship, spreading it widely on the mother's side. The individual, it is true, sees the kinship system only in relation to himself and does not reflect on

601 its general social functions, but the student perceives it, without reference to any particular person, as a means by which the members of Nuer society are interconnected in a complex network of numberless strands of relationship. We have noted that the wide tracing of kinship through both father and mother, and indeed through the wife also, and in every direction, is found together, as might be expected, with an extensive distribution of marriage prohibitions, to which the conventions governing bridewealth claims are complementary.

In seeking to understand Nuer society, abstractions from behaviour have been related to one another in order that it may be seen as a whole in the patterns which emerge from the confusion of actualities. We have dealt in this book mainly with the family, the kinship system, and the lineage system, and we have discussed their relations to one another in the whole society, particularly in terms of its political structure to which my earlier book was devoted. As I have explained there, the values of the different social systems operate in different situations and at different levels of social life. I have here attempted to show in demonstration of this thesis how interpersonal kinship relationships deriving from marriage and the family are organized into segments of the political structure through the dominant, or politically significant, lineages which, in the absence of any other principle of organization, alone make possible the large-scale community necessary, in the oecological conditions prevailing, to the Nuer way of life. The dominant lineages have a central position, for at one end they are structural groups with political functions, while at the other end they spread out into relationships of a kinship kind through which the attachments are made which enable them, while remaining distinct descent groups in certain situations, to become in other situations identified with residential groups and so to function politically.

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